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THE POINT OF PARLIAMENT

by

A. P. HERBERT

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**THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN
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**DEDICATED
WITH RESPECT
TO
COLONEL THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
DOUGLAS CLIFTON BROWN
SPEAKER
OF
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS**

Most of this book first appeared in *Punch*, under the title 'Not So Silly: A Child's Guide to Parliament'. I thank the proprietors for their courtesy in permitting republication. The author's second Election Address is rather shyly printed in Appendix Two at the special request of the Editors of 'Bridgeheads'.

A. P. H.

I

ONE DAY, Richard and Ivy, you will each have a vote, so I am going to tell you some things about Parliament.

I do not wonder, children, that there is already a vacant and a weary look upon your little faces. Perhaps you read the papers sometimes, though I know that you spend most of your spare time at the pictures or listening to classical music turned into dance-tunes by clever American composers. If you do read the papers you will have seen the word Parliament before: and you will wonder why your good Uncle Haddock should bother to tell you about Parliament. For when you see Parliament spoken of in the papers, you can be fairly sure that it will be spoken of in a pretty insulting way:¹ and if you still think that Parliament is a subject worthy of your attention in a world so delightfully full of aircraft, film-stars, and dance-band leaders I am highly surprised.

For example, Richard, you will have read in the papers, or heard at the dog-races, that Parliament is a mere 'talking-shop', that 'all they do there is to talk', and things like that. It is very funny that these things should be said, for the word Parliament comes from the French word *parler*, meaning 'to talk'; and that is what Parliament is for—*talking*. The English, long ago, made up their minds that it was better to decide things by *talking* than by cutting off people's heads, which was the old way. Now also we think it is better to decide things by talking than by putting people in prisons and whipping them or pulling out their finger-nails, which was the German way. So, you see, it is not very sensible to laugh at Parliament because it is a talking place. Indeed, it is often complained that some Members do not talk at all or do not talk enough. These Members are said to be neglecting their duties. So you see how hard it is to give complete satisfaction in this world. And what would be said

¹ It is not so bad now as it was when these little talks began.

if Parliament began to *do* things, *without* talking, I shudder to think. There would be a revolution at once.

So you must laugh in a knowing manner when you hear these things said. And you will laugh still more when I remind you that we have been fighting for freedom, which includes free speech and free Parliaments. So you would expect to hear, from time to time, a kindly reference to our own free Parliament and its Members.

But no. As you may have learned, Members of Parliament are known as 'politicians':¹ and politicians, with the possible exception of journalists, are the lowest form of serpent life. One day your poor Uncle Haddock was a well-respected citizen. The next day he was elected, or chosen by the people, to be a Member of Parliament, and became a despised politician, not much better than a bad oyster. It is hard to say why the politician should stand so low on the list of worthy callings. For politics, Ivy, is the whole business of the government and betterment of man; and any one who gives his time to such affairs should surely be forgiven, if not respected, especially if by so doing he has less time to make money for himself. And that, believe it or not, Richard, is the case of most politicians. Very few get anything out of it. Very many put all they can into it.

Well, I mean, there are seven hundred members of the House of Lords, and six hundred members of the House of Commons. But how many places are there in the Government? I forget. But I suppose the odds against your Uncle Haddock getting into the Cabinet, with five thousand a year (which, by the way, he would much dislike) are pretty heavy. It is true that every Member of the House of Commons now² receives six hundred pounds a year. But what is that? In these days, as you know, even free of income tax, that will not fetch much more than two small gins and a hair-cut. The American Congressman (who is like our Member of Parliament) gets about £2,500 a year, and many other advantages which we do not.

If you have attended carefully so far, which I slightly

¹ πόλις—(*polis*) a Greek word meaning 'city'. ² 1945.

doubt, Richard, you will understand how deeply surprised and wounded are these public-spirited and self-sacrificing men to find themselves the object of cosmic obloquy. What is cosmic obloquy? Well, Ivy, I must use some long words now and then, to keep you awake: and they mean universal unkindness.¹ But so it is. If a Member makes many speeches he is said to be always talking, eager for publicity or office. If he sits quiet and supports the King's Government, he is said to be a Yes-man, eager for office or a peerage.

If he gives all his time to politics he is called a 'professional' politician, which, for some reason, is a disgraceful thing to be. If, however, he has other interests and occupations, he is a mere dabbler, who does not take the thing seriously; and that is worse.

If he spends all his time at Westminster the people say 'You should come to the country and hear what *we* think'. But if he spends much time in the country he is told that he is an absentee and ought to be in his place at Westminster.

If the Members make solemn speeches they are dull: if they make amusing speeches they are frivolous.

If there are long debates the people say 'Why don't you *do* something?' But when the Members do something and produce an Act of Parliament there is nearly always a national outcry.

The last Parliament, Richard, enjoyed almost permanent abuse. It lasted, you see, for nearly ten years (which was five years longer than usual), and it was said to be the same old jaded body of incompetent and foolish men that the people in their wisdom elected in 1935. As a matter of fact, between that year and December 1944, no fewer than two hundred and eight new Members came in, so at least one-third of it was fairly fresh. Then it was said that it was elected in different circumstances and had no real right to open its mouth about anything. Well, it was elected to deal with dictators when the Top Wop, the first of them, was raging furiously. And it dealt with the Top Wop, Signor

¹ 'cosmic'—κόσμος (cosmos) Greek—'order—the world'.

'obloquy'—ob-loqui—To speak against—Latin.

Mussolini: it dealt with Hitler; and it missed dealing with Hirohito by a few weeks only. It stood by the Great Leader, though now and then it criticized. It went on working in the heart of London with bombs falling about, and on it, and 'doodle-bugs' flying overhead. It was the Victory Parliament. 'So', as you are fond of saying, 'what?'

Richard, I wish that you would stop chewing.

Well, children, that is one example. I wish to show you that it is not all so silly as it seems. And in the next lecture we will get going. That is, of course, if you have done your football pools in time.

II

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, as I was saying, nearly everything about Parliament is thought to be very silly by the people (who are fond of fighting for it). The Members are silly, and the things they do, and even the place in which they do it is silly also. Which is pretty bizarre.¹

Now, Ivy—stop chewing, Richard—there are two Houses of Parliament—and some clever people think that even that is silly, for they say that one would be enough. But these people are sillies themselves. Well, both the Houses, the House of Lords and the House of Commons, meet in the Royal Palace of Westminster, which is very handy for the Underground and the River. That, they say, was the idea of the great Duke of Wellington, who said that if Parliament met in Hyde Park it might easily be surrounded by an angry mob, but with the River at their backs the Members would always have a strategic² retreat. That remains to be seen. Much will depend on the number and speed of the vessels available to the fleeing legislators.³

The Palace, although it looks as if it had been built by the Goths, is only a hundred years old. Every year, you remember, on November the fifth, there is great rejoicing in the London streets, with fireworks and bonfires. Rockets are sent up, and collections of money are made, in memory of a man called Guy Fawkes, who attempted, without success, to blow up the British Parliament. (Every man in America, by the way, is called a guy in his honour.) But the odd thing is this. In 1834 the whole place (except for Westminster Hall and the Cloisters) was successfully burned down by a British workman. But not only are there no celebrations on the anniversary⁴ of that exploit, we do not even know his name;

¹ 'Bizarre'—French: 'odd, fantastic.'

² 'Strategic'—στρατηγός—strateegos—Greek: a general.

³ 'Legislator'—*Legis*—of a law: Latin: Lawgiver.

⁴ 'Anniversary'—*annus*—year: *versus*—turned: the same day so many years ago.

and, so far as I know, no Americans have been named after him. Why did he burn the place? Well, he was destroying old tax-tallies, or Exchequer receipts, in the Victoria Tower, and, carried away by his proper enthusiasm,¹ he overdid it. It was perhaps the most spirited protest against taxation in our history; though some people think that he went too far.

Well, that was in 1834. After a lot of argument it was decided to have a place for Parliament again, and Sir Charles Barry erected the present edifice in 1842. You will find his statue hidden away at the bottom of the Committee stairs. The Palace smells like a church and has a great many stairs, stone floors, and swing doors. The poor Members spend many man-hours politely holding open the swing doors for each other, or dashing them dangerously in each others' faces: and they march for miles each day about the stone floors, which gradually wears them out. It is not by any means the sedentary occupation it is made out to be, and the mortality is very high. Personally, I think the best thing in the whole building is the wood-carvings of fish and game and fruit in the Members' dining-room which I will show you one day. Dear little bunnies and pheasants and salmon—you would almost say that the fur and feathers—and fins—were real.

On May 10, 1941, the Germans burned down the Chamber of the House of Commons. On the same night they dropped some sort of a bomb through the roof of the Chamber of the House of Lords, but it did not go off: so, you see, they nearly got a right and left. Nevertheless, I suppose that, till the end of time, we shall go on celebrating the puny efforts of Mr. G. Fawkes.

By the way, you may have noticed Big Ben, which is at the north end of the Palace. Yes, the north end, Richard. Many people think that the Thames at that point runs east and west: in fact they would bet about it. But they are wrong. Big Ben, Richard, is not, as many people think, the name of the Tower (that is the Clock Tower), or the clock; it is the name of the big bell, weighing thirteen and a half

¹ 'Enthusiasm'—ἐνθεος—'entheos'—Greek: 'possessed by god'.

tons. But why the bell is called that I cannot tell you, for it was cast by the first Lord Grimthorpe, whose name was Edward. A Sir Benjamin Somebody comes in somewhere, but I forget where. Farther down the River is the Shell Mex Building which is the palace of Oil. That has a big clock too; and the funny men call it Big Benzine.

Twice, at least, one of the faces of Big Ben has been pitted by fragments of an enemy projectile. So you see to what depths of infamy the Germans will descend. Or perhaps it was the Italians.

I had intended to deal with the Constitution to-day, but there is not time now. So let me say a little more about the building.

The Commons' Cloak-Room is in the old Cloisters, which were also damaged by our unscrupulous foe. Every Member (in peace-time) has a peg with his name under it. Hanging from each peg is a length of pink tape with a bight, or loop, at the end of it. You will never guess what that is for, Richard. I will give you three guesses. Yes, Ivy, you have guessed right the first time. How clever girls are. Those loops are put there in case we wish to leave our swords before we go up to the Chamber. Now that is the sort of thing that some people call silly. But your Uncle Haddock thinks it is rather fun. It is more than that. It reminds the Members every day that Parliament began at a time when men were more inclined to decide things by fighting than by talking; so that its birth was all the more creditable. Some of the lower nations whose citizens still fight each other a good bit might look upon these loops with profit.

Then, when I show you over the Chamber, you will see a narrow rug or mat which lies before the front benches on either side. A Member speaking from those benches must not put so much as the toe of his boot over the outer edge of that mat. If he does there will be cries of 'Order! Order!' which is very disturbing, sometimes, because the poor Member does not know who has done what. For all he knows some one else has offended, or he has said the wrong thing, or his upper denture has fallen out. The point of this Rule is

that no man while speaking must be within sword's length of the fellow on the other side of the gangway. That, again, may sound silly, Richard, for we do not often take our swords into the Chamber. But it is not so silly as it sounds. For even in that sedate assembly rough passions do arise, and, if we were allowed to roam about while speaking who knows but some rude interrupter might get a clip on the jaw. Indeed, I have seen it done.

In war-time, by the way, we had no names under our pegs. That was to show that Members can be as tough as any one, and in the common cause we did not care who took whose hat.

III

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, as I think I told you, there are two Houses of Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and before a Bill becomes law it has to pass through both Houses. Yes, Ivy, you are quite right, it must also receive the assent of the King.

The members of the House of Commons are chosen by the people. The members of the House of Lords are chosen by the King. Many people think that the King makes the better job of it, but that is a very reactionary¹ opinion. What is reactionary, Ivy? Well, a reactionary, nowadays, is almost anybody you don't much like. If you ask me for three helpings of treacle tart and I give you only two, that would be pretty reactionary of me, do you see? Yes, I think you might also say that I was a vested interest obstructing the march of progress.

When the King dissolves Parliament, or sends it away, a new House of Commons is chosen, but the House of Lords remains as it was before. So when people say 'Let us have a General Election and a new Parliament' all they will get is half a new Parliament.

That does not matter much, because the old half, the House of Lords, is a very good half. It is what is called a Second Chamber. You remember, Richard, when you had that cough and your doctor said he thought you had tuberculosis. Your father was much disturbed, and asked for a Second Opinion: and the second doctor said that all you had was the whooping-cough. Well, that is like the House of Lords. A Second Chamber is an indispensable feature of any democratic constitution: for no one is always right the first time, especially in these days when you can make the millions believe almost anything if you are bad-tempered and noisy enough. As a matter of fact the House of Lords nowadays very seldom questions a major decision of the

¹ 'Reactionary'—'inclined or favourable to reaction' (O.E.D.).

House of Commons; it passes all sorts of bizarre proposals in the most meek and obliging manner. But it is still very useful for correcting mistakes of grammar and spelling in the Bills sent up from the House of Commons, and for putting in anything the Commons or the Government forgot, or did not think of till the last minute. The silly people who wish to abolish the House of Lords—yes, they do, Ivy—forget that it has this practical value; and if you did do away with one Second Chamber, you would soon have to set up another.

But Parliament is not for making laws only. It is for expressing and creating opinion on a number of things. The Lords are very good at this; for among them are top experts on almost everything. I do not say that all the Lords are experts. There are many hundreds, they say, whom nobody has ever seen. They live in the woods and do not know anything, except about port-wine and pheasants. Some people say that such persons ought not to be members of a House of Parliament, but I do not see why; for they do not come to Parliament, they have nothing particular to say, and give no trouble at all.

The ones who do come do not say anything unless they have something particular to say, and as a rule they know quite a lot. All the best bishops are there, and all the best judges, and some of the best doctors, and men who have been ambassadors, or governors, or bankers, or princes of industry, not to mention a few of the top admirals and generals. In fact, if any one is thinking of starting an argument in the House of Lords it is just as well to make sure that he knows what he is talking about, or he may be blown out of the water.

And they have some sensible habits. The faithful Commons insist on pretending that they take no notice of meal-times. The debates go on just the same during luncheon or dinner. But of course, unless it is the Prime Minister speaking, nearly every one goes out for a bite, leaving some wretched orator with a very small audience indeed. Your Uncle Haddock once made a fifty minutes' oration about the Merchant Service to ten Members, two Whips and a junior.

Minister. But when the Lords think that it is time for a meal they adjourn the proceedings, without a word, and quietly return to the Chamber when they have done.

There is another thing. In the Commons we have a Speaker, so called because he speaks for the Commons to Kings and Judges and any other outside person when it is necessary. He has to keep order and decide which Member shall speak next. But the Lords do not have such an officer. The Lord Chancellor sits there on the Woolsack; but I believe he has no control over the Peers if they become unruly. They control themselves. If Lord Black and Lord White both stand up to speak at the same time (which hardly ever happens) the peers mutter or cry out 'Lord Black', if he is the one they want to hear: and, as a rule, Lord White gracefully resumes his seat. If he did not, if he insisted on speaking at the same time as Lord Black, I do not quite know what would be the end of it. But I fancy there would have to be a division or vote; they would go into the Lobbies and vote for Black or White speaking, as they preferred.

And of course they have one wholly delightful advantage. At any time during a speech any Lord who does not like it much may rise and beg to move 'That the Noble Lord be no more heard'. And if the Noble Lord still persists in speaking they can vote on that and stop him. In the Commons, in theory, there is no way of stopping a speaker once he has caught the Speaker's eye and gets the floor of the House. Provided he is not guilty of disorderly language, of irrelevance,¹ or tedious repetition he can go on speaking till the end of the day, and in certain cases all next day as well. It is true that he would not be very popular, and it is not certain that he would catch the Speaker's eye next time: but a man who really wanted to do a big thing like that would not be likely to be put off by little things like those. In the Lords, however, they could stop his nonsense at once.

So, you see, in many ways their arrangements are more civilized than ours. And, what is more, as even the Commons agree, their debates are often of higher quality, though not

¹ 'Irrelevant'—not to the purpose.

so noisy. That is to say, on the same subject, you are likely to hear more good speeches in the Lords than in the Commons.

Yet there are people who go about saying loudly that the House of Lords must be abolished or reformed. Well, you know what some reformers are, Richard. Or perhaps you don't. They must reform things whether they need reforming or not. They cannot look at a pillar-box without thinking 'That has been there for a long time. There must be something wrong with it'. If it is a round pillar-box they will ask for a square one: and if it is a square one nothing will satisfy them but a round one. The fact that the present pillar-box is doing its job with complete success means nothing to them.

For example, some people say that the Second Chamber should be chosen by the people, like the House of Commons. But then at once you would have all the defects of the House of Commons without necessarily improving the House of Lords. Having been elected by the people, the Members would think it necessary to talk much more, in order to please their constituents and justify their election. And that would not inevitably improve the standard of debate. Besides, having been elected by the people, they would start to put on airs and interfere with things much more than they do now, which is the last thing the reformers want.

Some people are much upset by what is called the 'hereditary principle'. That means that when a member of the Upper House dies his son, or other heir, takes his place, and his son after him. That great soldier Wellington, for example, was made a Duke because he won the Battle of Waterloo. There is now another Duke of Wellington in the House of Lords: and the reformers say it is illogical and wrong that he should be able to speak and vote about the laws to-day just because his ancestor won the Battle of Waterloo one hundred and thirty years ago.

Well, there is something in that. But there is also something in heredity. Our eggs and bacon very much depend on it: and we study carefully the parentage of race-horses before we risk our money on them. The son of a great statesman, who all his youth has met other statesmen in the home and

heard them talk, is most likely to have a special aptitude and inclination for public affairs. But this is not bound to go on for ever. So I myself, if it had anything to do with me, would accept a compromise. I would agree that the right to vote and speak in the House of Lords should endure for one generation after the first holder of the title: but after that the young men should make their own way and stand for the House of Commons. But I do not flatter myself that my improvements would increase the happiness of a single citizen; and that, after all, is the test.

In fact, Ivy, the House of Lords, like many of our institutions, looks pretty bizarre, but it works.

And, by the way, it works for nothing.

IV

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, as I was saying, everything about Parliament is thought to be very silly by the people.

For example, many are the jests and accusations which are flung against Parliamentary procedure. The people say 'What is all this Parliamentary procedure? Holding things up. Why do you not cut it out and get on and *do* something?'

Yes, but—stop chewing, Richard—it is not so simple as that. After all, you must have *rules* about almost everything. When you are playing cricket, Richard, not more than one man is allowed to bowl at the same time. That is Cricket Procedure.

You will, I am sure, agree that it is a wise and good rule. Each of the other ten men in the field, it is true, believes sincerely that if only he were permitted to throw a ball at the batsman he would throw it with much more skill and effect than the man who is, in fact, entrusted with the task.

Far away in the long-field they raise their eyebrows, they heave deep sighs, and make low whistles to express their sense of frustration and concern. But suppose that all the eleven men were allowed to throw a ball at the batsman at the same time, you must see that great disorder would result: and, though it is likely that the batsman would soon be got out (and even knocked out), nobody would ever know whether he was a good batsman or not.

Well, that rule, now I come to think of it, is the basis of all Parliamentary procedure. All may speak in turn; but only one man may speak at a time.

And he may only speak about one thing at a time. Sometimes you hear your daddy say 'I wonder our Member does not speak more about the shortage of oysters or the increase of burglary'. But you cannot talk about oysters or burglary when the subject fixed for debate is coal-mines or foot-and-mouth disease. Just as you cannot play cricket and hockey at the same time.

Again, I have heard your daddy say 'I wonder our Member did not speak yesterday when they were debating about the Better World'. He little knows how hard his Member tried. You must remember that there are six hundred and forty Members. Nearly all these, naturally, think that they have something worth saying about the Better World, but in any one day there is only time for about twenty Members to speak. So it is quite absurd to think that any man can pop up at any moment and talk about anything he likes, though if he waits patiently the opportunity will come sooner or later, especially if it is the Better World.

As a matter of fact, your daddy's Member spent several days preparing a speech about the Better World with all sorts of unanswerable statistics and eloquent phrases—What are statistics, Ivy? They are political arithmetic—well, he gave his name to the Speaker and looked forward to electrifying both Parliament and people. All day from 8.15 in the afternoon till 10.15 in the evening he sat in his place; and whenever a Member sat down he stood up, with about thirty other Members, and looked at the Speaker, hoping to 'catch his eye'. But he never caught the Speaker's eye. Every time the Speaker called on some one else, and your daddy's Member had to sit down again. This is called 'bumping'. It is very exhausting. All day he did not have anything to eat or drink. By the end of the day he did not care very much whether there was a Better World or not. This will show you how the politician suffers. But such misfortunes are cheerfully accepted.

For, as a rule, he has the comforting reflection that everything he was going to say was said four times by other people, and so there is just as likely to be a Better World as if he had spoken. It is a sort of team-work, you see, like cricket, Richard. It does not matter who bowls as long as some one gets the brutes out.

Another thing, Richard. The Members must be polite to each other. At least, they must be formally polite. You must never refer to another Member by his name. You must say 'The Honourable Member for West Bumbleton'. Some

people think it very silly, and a waste of time. But it is not so silly. It is all part of the business of preserving order, and without order you cannot get anything done. You see, when tempers rise, a little remark like 'Mister Smith is a liar' slips out very easily. But in Parliament that is not allowed. First, you must remember which is Mister Smith's constituency. Is it West Burbleton? Or Burbleton Boroughs? Or Clackmannan and Ross? Or what? Then you must remember whether Mister Smith is a lawyer or a soldier or sailor. For all Members are Honourable: but lawyers are Learned as well, and the officers in the Forces are Gallant. Now, you have an idea at the back of your head that Mister Smith was some sort of a major at the beginning of the war: so to be on the safe side you give him a Gallant. You must not say that he is a liar, for that is one of the un-Parliamentary or forbidden words. But you may say that he is mistaken or misinformed or characteristically inaccurate. Or you may say 'The Honourable and Gallant Member for the Hinchin Division of Oldcastle is, I am sure without intention, misleading the House'. Well, by the time you have sorted out these problems and got all those words off your chest, the fire, or some of it, has gone out of you. What is more, you have not said anything the other fellow can object to: whereas if you had said 'Mister Smith is a liar' he would probably step across the Floor and catch you a clip on the jaw. Not that that would matter much: but it would hold up and delay the business of the House.

It is a question for the Speaker what kinds of abuse are proper or 'Parliamentary'. He is guided, to some extent, by the rulings of the past; but of course the fashion changes, here as elsewhere. In the past the following expressions have been ruled improper: 'dodge'—'factious opposition'—'hypo-critical lovers of liberty'—'villains'—'impertinence'—'gross calumny'—'ruffianism'—'windbag'—'pharisee'—'slanderer'—'murderer'—'hooligan'—'blackguard'—'shabby'—'dirty tricks'—'criminal'—'disgraceful'—'deliberately raising a false issue'. Well, they say that we are not so tough as our fathers, Richard, but you will see at once how undesirable it would

be if we imitated our fathers—though your Uncle Haddock must admit that he *has* heard one or two of these bad expressions used recently, with not much trouble to any one.

But the principle remains. Words—not swords. If a Member is called to order for an improper attack upon another, he must withdraw or apologize, and the other Member must say that he is satisfied. If not, they can both be shut up in the Clock Tower, or somewhere, till they do. For otherwise they may go out and have a battle elsewhere; which would not be good for the name of Parliament. There are not many institutions which take such wise precautions. Most pubs and institutions do not care how much their members fight so long as they do not fight on the premises. But that is what is called a pretty short-term viewpoint.

V

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, I was telling you about Parliamentary procedure. Some people say it is slow and cumbrous: why not cut it out and get things done quickly? One answer is that when you are making laws for the people the important thing is not to be quick but careful. Besides, it would be very dangerous if any law could be very quickly made. You, Richard, may be eager to have a law passed that cream buns shall be distributed every morning, and you may fret at the various rules and stages which delay the passage of that beneficent measure. But suppose that some one came along with a Bill to Prohibit Cream Buns? You would be very glad then that there were all these rules and opportunities of delay so that the forces of reason could be deployed against the iniquitous proposal. You see, it works both ways.

And, as a matter of fact, when every one is agreed about anything, nothing could be swifter than the procedure. It goes through in a flash. Look how swiftly the sad business of the last King's Abdication was done.

It is only where there is disagreement that there is delay: and then it is right.

But of course 'procedure' is not only for delay.

You remember, Richard, when you went to the paper factory, how they did different things in the different rooms and buildings. First they sawed the wood, and then they crushed it, and then they put it in vats and poured acid on it; and they shredded it and rolled it and so on—all the time the same pieces of wood—until at last it came out at the other end of the building as a nice bit of paper. It is the same with the making of tanks or toffee.

Well, it is the same with the making of laws in the law factory. There are various stages, not invented for fun or to be annoying, but for efficiency.

Let us say that you want Parliament to make a law that

Ivy shall have a free Christmas dinner every month—with turtle soup, turkey and goose, mince-pies and delicious cream buns. First of all you would have to ask the House for permission to introduce a Bill called 'Ivy's Christmas Dinner (Monthly) Bill'. If the House said 'Yes', it would be 'read' a first time and ordered to be printed. A Bill must be 'read' three times in each House, to become law. The first time it is not really read and there is no talking, but the Bill is printed and every one can look at it quietly and see what it is all about.¹

The next thing would be that the Bill would be 'set' down for Second Reading or put on the programme for a certain day. That gives any one interested in Ivy's stomach an opportunity to be present. You would have to 'move' that the Bill 'be now read a second time', and you would have to explain why Ivy needed so much to eat. On the Second Reading the main principle of the Bill is discussed—what it is all about. Some Members might say that they saw no reason why Ivy should have a Christmas dinner every month, though they would not mind if it was every other month. Some might say that they knew a lot of other children who ought to have the same number of Christmas dinners. Others might say that they were in general agreement and would vote for the Second Reading, but they were not happy about the details of the menu and would move amendments at a later stage. And some one would be sure to say that he thought it should be a Christmas *luncheon*, because he did not approve of Ivy staying up late and going to bed with a distended tummy.

Well, at the end of the debate there is a division, or vote. We will suppose that you win and the Second Reading is carried. That means that the House has approved the principle of the Bill—but not the details. Ivy is to have a Christmas dinner; but it is not settled what she will have—or how much.

So the Bill is 'committed' or handed over to a 'Committee' and in committee the details are discussed. Nobody at this

¹ There is a Bill at the end of this book (page 94).

stage can start the argument about Ivy having a Christmas dinner. But they can put down an amendment:

'To leave out "turkey" and insert "rabbit"'

or

'To leave out "goose" and insert "cold boiled mutton".'

On the other hand the friends of Ivy might try to improve the simple repast. They could put down an amendment:

'Before "turtle soup" insert "oysters".'

Well, all these amendments are debated, and perhaps voted on, until the whole Bill has been gone over with what some writers call a small tooth-comb.

The next thing is the Report stage. What is that, Richard? I am trying to tell you. All this hard work has been done, as a rule, by a small selected body of Members, in rather dreary rooms upstairs, with no publicity. When they have done, the Bill is reported back to the House, as amended; and the Members who were not on the Committee can have a go at it if they like. On the details, still, you understand. It is like the Committee stage, only the whole House is concerned. This stage is useful for tidying up, and for second thoughts. For example, when some one proposed that Ivy should have oysters as well as turtle soup, the Minister might say, 'Well, I am all for that, but I am not sure if there are any oysters. Before the Report stage I will find out.' So on the Report stage the same amendment is put down, and, if the Minister has found any oysters, he may accept it. Or not.

The next, and last, stage is the Third Reading.

By now, you see Richard, the House has approved the principle, and its Committee has amended the details; and it has this last chance to inspect the whole thing and see what it thinks of it. If it likes it can refuse to give a Third Reading, and that will be the end of the Bill; but it cannot do any more serious amendment in detail. So there are now different rules of debate. You cannot complain about the details, for they are settled; you cannot complain that something or other—treacle tart, for example—is not in the Bill. You should have done that in Committee, or on the Report stage.

But you can say that you do not like what is in the Bill as it stands. You can say that you gave it a tepid support on Second Reading, and hoped that it would be improved in Committee. But now that you see it again you think it is verminous, and cannot give a vote for it. It will corrupt Ivy, cause revolution, upset the Balance of Trade, and so forth.

Well, then there is a vote, or 'division' on the Third Reading. If that is carried the clerks write some words in Norman French upon it (with which I will not trouble you) and it is sent along the passage to the House of Lords. There it goes through precisely the same process—three Readings, Committee and Report—though in the Lords they very seldom take so long.

When the Bill has had its Third Reading all that remains is the Royal Assent. The King—or his representatives—still gives his assent in Norman French—'*Le Roy le veult*', which is pretty bizarre, but does no harm. If he refused his assent, which nowadays he never does, he would say '*Le Roy s'avisera*'.

The Bill now becomes law. It is an *Act of Parliament*—or a Statute: and those clever people who have for so long been saying 'Why don't you *do* something?' now unite to say 'Why ever did you do *that*?'

Such, Richard, roughly and briefly, is Parliamentary procedure on the legislative or law-making side. I hope my description has not been too foggy. If it has, it is not the fault of the system, which is very sound and scientific. Of course, there is a way of quickening the whole thing: and that is to let all the laws be made by Government Departments in those big offices I showed you in Whitehall. Any one who prefers that is welcome, I am sure. But, apart from that, if any one can suggest a really good amendment to the present procedure, I will give him a bag of sovereigns.

VI

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, last time I was telling you about the way the laws are made; and I must say you stood it very well.

But of course the making of laws is only one part, and even a small part, of Parliament's duties. If no laws were ever passed again, the country would still stagger on; but Parliament would still have plenty to do. For one thing, it is our duty to watch how the Government administers the existing laws and pull the Ministers up if they do the dirty. For another thing, quite apart from politics or party, it is the Member's pride and joy to safeguard the interests and support the complaints of the individual citizens, whether they voted for the Member or not. And the machinery which exists for this purpose is truly remarkable. Indeed, I do not think there is anything like it in the world.

If a citizen has a grievance against the State he can always write to his Member about it. It is a privilege which should not be abused in these difficult days, when stamps cost twopence half-penny; and as a rule a stamped and addressed envelope should be enclosed. The Member reads these letters (if there are not too many), and if they disclose a serious trouble which some Government Department has the power to put right he sends the letters to the proper Minister. It must be something for which a Minister is responsible. For example, it would be no use your complaining that you never seem to back a winner at the dog-races; but if you wrote about the milk in your school being full of arsenic, I should send it on to the Minister of Education, and he would pass it on to the milk-in-schools department. Quite soon there would be a polite letter from the Minister saying that the matter has been looked into very carefully, and as a matter of fact there was no more arsenic than usual in your milk; or else that he will have the 'arsenic content' reduced. I send this letter on to you, and bang goes another twopence

half-penny. All this is a great nuisance to everybody, but there it is, it is a great democratic thingummy.

And if you or I are not satisfied, it need not stop there. I can put down on the 'Order Paper' a Question to the Minister about the arsenic in your milk. He must have two days' notice: but after that he has jolly well got to answer my question, in public. Some people would put a Question down at once, without writing a letter. But that is bad strategy. For a Question annoys them, and causes trouble, and puts the Department's back up; and you are more likely to get satisfaction from a polite letter.

Still, if our backs are up also, and we want to make a public scandal, that is the way. And if the Minister gives a rude answer, I can put a stinging 'supplementary' question—that is, if I can think of one: and if it is a good one the papers will print it and poor Richard's arsenic will become a national affair.

('Supplementary' means here 'additional' or 'extra'. Suppose the Minister replies to the main question: 'There has never been any arsenic in the milk at any Hammersmith school.' The Member who put the Question might pop up and say, 'Is my Right Honourable friend aware that two children died of arsenical poisoning in Hammersmith this week?' But a 'supplementary' is supposed to 'arise' out of the first question and answer; and if Members stray too far away the Speaker may intervene, or the Minister may ask for 'notice'. For example, if the Member says, 'All very well, but is there not a great deal of *strychnine* in the milk?' The Minister will say, 'I must have notice of that Question,' and quite right, too. Some Members pop in 'supplementaries' which they would not have been allowed to put down on the Order Paper, but that is naughty.)

If I am still not satisfied, I can go even farther. I can give notice that I propose to raise the matter in debate 'on the adjournment';¹ though, let me tell you, Richard, there would have to be an awful lot of arsenic in your milk before I did that. Then one day, when the main business of the day is

¹ 'adjourn' = 'ad jurnus'—like. 'a jour'—to (another) day.

over and we are ready to 'adjourn', I am allowed to make a short speech about you and your milk, and the Minister, to whom I have given notice, has to be present and make some reply. By this time, perhaps, the whole House is agog about your milk and there will be a lot of Members supporting me, and indignantly interrupting the Minister; and there is such a rumpus that afterwards the Whips say to the Minister, 'Look here, this will not do! You will have to take the arsenic out of the children's milk', and something happens. Or perhaps no one cares very much whether there is arsenic in your milk or not: and then there will be very few people about. Either way, it is a very big democratic thingummy. What it comes to is this, that no matter how humble the citizen, with how small a grievance against the King's Ministers, if his Member thinks fit (and it is not always fit), his trouble can be brought before Parliament within two days by way of a Question, and later in debate on the floor of the House.

Now, Questions, Richard, happen every day except Friday: and they last for an hour. Here are the Questions all ready printed for next Tuesday, do you see?—ninety-nine of them. They range all over the field of life, from the A.T.S. to the Atlantic Charter, from Sapper Smith and his thirty-two boils to General Plastiras and his plebiscite, from fruit prices to the design of tanks, from agriculture to the Gold Standard. Some of them may seem to you to be pretty bizarre and a waste of time: but we do not all know everything; and, believe me, on the whole, it is a unique and wonderful safety-valve, forum, and democratic hoo-ha.

I do not think there is anything like it in the world. There are no Questions to Ministers in the American Congress. For one thing, the Ministers are not there, and cannot be hounded about by the Members. I do not know what happens in Russia: but I doubt very much whether nasty questions to Ministers in public are strongly encouraged.

Then of course, apart from personal grievances or troubles, the Members are always acting as a channel of opinion and feeling between the people and the Ministers. On Fridays most of the Members go off to their constituencies, away up

to Scotland and odd places like that; they see their agents and friends and drop into one or two licensed premises; and when they come back on Monday they know much more what the people are thinking than you will get from a Gallup Poll, or even the papers. They tell the Whips, and the Whips tell the Government. What are Whips, Ivy? I will explain that another day. Now, before Hitler could know what the people were thinking he had to have a Gauleiters' Meeting—and spend a lot of money on the Gestapo. We do the thing more simply—and better: because nobody dared to tell the Gestapo or Hitler what he was thinking. Not that Hitler cared.

Then, of course, all sorts of people, and trades, and associations are eager to tell the Members what they think ought to be done. They write long letters and resolutions: they bring deputations to London. The letters have to be answered; the people have to be met, and there must be committee meetings to decide what to do. So get it out of your head, Richard, that all the Members have to do is to sit in the Chamber and listen to speeches or stand up and make speeches. And when some clever newspaper-man records with horror and dismay that during the debate on arsenic in Richard's milk there were only thirty Members 'in their places', and how very shocking, do not pay much attention. At that moment there may have been four hundred Members in the building, all busy. Some are in the Library preparing speeches for the big debate on Coal to-morrow, or the big debate on Beveridge the next day. Others are answering silly letters from your daddy. Others are at Committee meetings upstairs, about the supply of paper, the grievances of soldiers, the future of films, the economics of Newfoundland; or welcoming General Smuts, the Mayor of Brussels—or the Mayor of Birmingham. Your Member has a perfect right to make a fuss about your milk; but life is so complicated now that no one can deal with it all; and there is no obligation on any one to be interested in your milk—unless, of course, it is shown that *all* the children's milk is full of arsenic. The newspaper-man will then see quite enough Members in the Chamber. But, meanwhile, all he has proved is that he can count up to thirty.

VII

THERE MAY be one or two other points of 'procedure', Richard, which have puzzled you. I expect you have read, with wonder, about a Bill or debate being 'talked out', or of the House being 'counted out': and I will tell you about that.

Both these things used to happen frequently in the good old days when private Members, as well as the Government, were able to introduce Bills and propose new laws. All that had to be given up during the late war, Ivy; and even now, because of the 'Reconstruction', we can only try to amend Government Bills. This is a pity, because private Members have good ideas too, and very often they would introduce Bills about things which no Government would touch, for fear of trouble. What sort of things, Ivy? Well, betting, for example, or the football pools, or Sunday entertainment, or marriage laws, or beer.

Samuel Plimsoll, who did so much for the seamen, began his career by introducing a 'Private Member's Bill'.

Now, these Bills were always discussed on Friday, from eleven to four. There might be two or three Bills put down for Second Reading on the same Friday; and if they were all about small things they might all be dealt with after adequate discussion. But suppose that number three is a more important and controversial Bill—a Bill, shall we say, to abolish Beer. And suppose that it comes on about two, with two hours to go before the House adjourns. Now suppose that no one spoke against it, the Second Reading would be carried at once. But a Bill so drastic and repugnant to all decent feeling should obviously not secure a Second Reading—that is, you remember, Ivy, be accepted in principle—without ample debate, and there will be plenty of Members with something to say. Now, at five minutes to four your Uncle Haddock is speaking, and at four o'clock the sitting must come to an end. If he stops speaking before four the Member in charge of the Bill will move that 'the Question be now

put', that is, that there shall be a vote. It is not certain that the Speaker would allow that after only two hours' talk on so loathsome a measure, but he might. So, to make sure, your Uncle Haddock, who 'has the floor', would go on talking, with one eye on the clock, till the clock said four, and there could be no vote. The Bill would then have to be postponed to another day. It has been 'talked out'. In such a case it is a legitimate manœuvre, though, of course, like everything else, it can be used naughtily. But then it is not always easy; for if there is a long time to go, the 'talker out' may be hard put to it to think of new things to say.

It is all based, you see, Richard, on the sound principle that if a thing is not agreeable to every one it must not be rushed or smuggled through, but all must have their say. So, once again, it is not so silly as it sounds.

Then there is 'counting out'. The rule is that any Member may 'take notice' that there are not forty Members present in the Chamber. 'Forty' is what is called a *quorum*, Richard. The idea, I suppose, is that if there are fewer than that the business cannot be very important, and we may as well go home. Or perhaps it is that a handful of Members may get up to mischief while the others are away. I am not quite sure.

But what happens is this. The Speaker turns over his sand-glass, in which the sand takes just two minutes to run through the little hole. At the end of the two minutes, if there are not forty Members present, the House adjourns and all is over for the day. Bells are rung all over the building, and all the nice policemen cry 'Count'. If it is Government business the dutiful Members jump up from the dinner-table and canter upstairs to the Chamber, panting, chewing, and brushing the crumbs from their trousers. When the Speaker has counted 'forty' they can go back to lunch or dinner. I should add that a Member who 'calls a count' during meal-time is not very popular.

Now, this Rule was sometimes used as a manœuvre on private Members' Fridays. It might be that the Members did not like a certain Bill, but did not want to vote against it,

VIII

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, I expect you have heard about the Party System, because certain lofty-minded people are fond of saying that all should act according to their own conscience and judgment and not to the dictates of others; and of all the silly things this is considered to be about the silliest.

Your Uncle Haddock is not a 'party man' but an 'independent', so he too might take a lofty line. But he does not. He thinks that he is fortunate and, in his case, right; but he does not pat himself upon the back, and he is quite sure that Parties are necessary and on the whole desirable. When he played football he was a swift and agile half-back, and enjoyed his position; but he was very far from despising the scrum.

When you come to know more about life, children, you will find that in an organized society the times when you can exercise your own conscience and judgment independently are not so numerous as you may think now.

When you are fielding at point, Richard, and a very large batsman comes in, your own conscience and judgment may whisper that it would be a good thing if you withdrew some yards farther away. But the captain and the bowler know better. They know that the batsman is not so formidable as he looks, and that if he gets a nice long-hop breaking from leg the chances are he will pop it into your hands. So, at whatever peril to your little body, they bring you closer. The common purpose is served, and no one thinks the worse of you—unless you drop the catch.

In the same way the soldiers of an Army have a common purpose; and though many may think they know better than the general they cannot always act as they judge best. What is more, the independent guerrilla in the woods may be very brave and useful; but he is not likely to finish the job by himself, and must from time to time co-operate with regular troops.

As for you, Ivy dear, you have been in a bus-queue, and that is a sort of party system. The people in the queue may all dislike each other intensely; they may all be very swift and strong: but they all want to get into a bus as swiftly and quickly as they can, so they agree to stand and take their turn instead of each one acting by himself.

Well, now, a political party is also a body of men with a common purpose. Some think they know more than others, and some do not agree with all the others about everything. But on the whole they find it better to work together like a cricket team.

Every party has five or six men who are called Whips, which is rather a stupid name, taken from hunting. I would rather call them the Staff: for like the Staff officers of a general they work out the plans, they must know all about the battle, give advice and information to the troops and help them when they can. It is quite a mistake to think of the Whips as cruel ogres whose only purpose is to lash the terrified legislators into the wrong lobbies. The Whips—at least, the good Whips—are the guides, philosophers¹ and friends of the Members. After all, it is their job to get the Members to do what they want, without anything like military discipline: so why should they be unnecessarily unkind?

Let us see how it works, Richard. In the Chamber, perhaps, they are debating a Government Bill about the breeding of bees. Now, I have explained already that all the Members cannot be in the Chamber listening to speeches all the time: indeed, it would be a great waste of time if they were. No individual can deal with everything in this complicated life. While they are discussing bees in the Chamber, Mister Smith is in the Library preparing his magnificent speech about Coal for Wednesday; and Mister Jones in the Smoking Room is making plans with Mister Robinson for Thursday's debate on the Fish Situation. Or perhaps they are all entertaining Haile Selassie or General Smuts to dinner.

Well, in the Chamber the tiresome—or heroic—Mister

¹ 'Philosopher'—Greek: 'lover of wisdom'.

Thompson wants the Bill to be extended to wasps: he keeps on moving amendments about wasps and pressing them to a division, or vote. The bells ring and the Members dutifully leave their fried cod, their guests, their constituents or conspiracies or studies, and go to the Chamber to vote. At the entrance stand the Whips, and the Whips tell them which way the Government, or the other side, would like them to vote.

And here the lofty-minded persons say: 'Oh, but they have not heard the debate and do not know the rights and wrongs of the subject, so they should not vote.' Yes, but the Whips—the Staff—are always there—or some of them. They do know what are the rights and wrongs, according to their Government or Party. And, by the way, there is not always any clear question of right or wrong. It may be a fifty-fifty matter—like keeping to the left or the right on the roads—where anybody may be right. Then any one who has not studied it or heard the speeches may well take the advice of the Whips—the Staff—who represent the Government or the Party. They have studied the question, and they have decided one way or the other; and the King's Government must go on.

That is a thing to remember. In the papers you only read about the big exciting things that happen in Parliament. But small necessary dull things are being done all the time: and if the Government could not rely on a steady body of supporters, or soldiers, any one with cranky ideas could hold up everything and there would be chaos.

I must admit that it is often annoying when you feel that the debate has gone all your way and scores of Members who were not there are summoned to vote you down. I think the Government, on small things, should be much more ready to accept the opinion expressed in the Chamber. But that is no reflection on the loyal private Members.

When your Uncle Haddock became a Member he said loftily: 'I will never vote unless I am quite sure what it is about and what I believe.' But suppose I am dining with three Party Members while Mister Thompson is trying to get

his wasps into the Bees Bill, about which I have no feeling, one way or another. The bell rings and the three Party Members get up and go off to support the Government, leaving their soup. How can I say 'Ha, ha! I am a lofty Independent. I am going to stay here and enjoy my fish'? It would be the action of a pompous ass.

Of course, when I get to the Chamber I can ask what the vote is about, and if I do not agree with the Government I can vote against them, or go back to my dinner without voting at all. (That is called 'abstaining'.) And, of course, still more can a Member do that on the big important things where conscience and judgment really do come in.

But what will happen then, Ivy? Well, then, I believe, the Whips, or Staff, may send for the Member and ask him to explain his conduct, as the officers would ask a deserter in the Army. Which is perfectly reasonable. If he does it often I think the Labour Party may expel him; but the Conservative and Liberal Parties do not seem to mind so much. If he is expelled he is still a Member of Parliament, and free to exercise his own conscience and judgment without restraint, which is what he wanted. So what is he complaining about?

IX

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, there are still a few miscellaneous pieces of information which may interest you. Not that I care very much about that. It is, if you will forgive me, a fault of the younger generation to-day that so many of them think that they need not make an effort unless they are interested. When I was young it was very different. I was not at all interested in five-finger exercises or even in Easy Studies in A Flat Minor. I wanted to dash on to Gilbert and Sullivan at once. But I jolly well had to go on with my five-finger exercises: and now I can play Gilbert and Sullivan, which is more than you will ever do, poor Richard, good as you may be at switching on the wireless.

Well, recently, as you may have read, there has been much talk about the shape and size of the Chamber of the House of Commons. The old one, you remember, was destroyed by the wicked Germans: and the question is, Shall the new one be built more or less like it?

The old one was oblong in shape and small in size: small, that is, for the number of the Members—it does not seem small, I can tell you, the first time you stand up and give tongue. There were—how many Members, Ivy? That is a good girl—615. But there were seats for only 346 on the floor of the House, and another 91 upstairs—437 altogether. Well, that sounds very silly, does it not, Ivy—not enough seats for all the Commons in the House of Commons?

It is not really so silly. If all the Protestants in London decided to go to St. Paul's Cathedral on the same morning there would not be enough seats for all of them, would there? But they do not all go. And the fact is that the occasions on which *all* the Members wish to be in the Chamber at the same time are very few and far between. Even when Mr. Churchill was making a great speech about the war there were always many who were sick or travelling or doing other duties. On such occasions there is room for

many of the overflow to stand, or squat on the floor—for instance, at the Bar of the House. There are even some who think that the spectacle of eager legislators standing or squatting in every odd corner adds excitement and importance to the scene, besides advertising the powers of endurance and readiness to suffer of Honourable and Right Honourable Members.

But of course we do not have ‘historic occasions’ and magnificent orations every day: and what is much more important is that the Chamber should be suitable for the ordinary day, the ordinary dull day, when there may never be more than, say, fifty to a hundred Members present at the same time. We are in Committee, perhaps, on the Ivy Christmas Dinner Bill, deciding the small points—what kind of stuffing, and how many crackers, and shall there be mince-pies as well as pudding. In this kind of work loud and eloquent speeches are out of place. The Members talk in a conversational tone, as persuasively as they can. This is the real work of the House, and that is the best way to do it. But you could not do it so well in a great barn of a place with seats—and desks—for 640 people (the present number).

But that is what some of the reformers would like. They want a large semicircular Chamber, like the Dress Circle at the Lyceum, rising to a great height at the back. Every Member would have his own seat, with perhaps a desk, and an ink-pot and a place for books and papers, and so on: and, as Mr. Churchill pointed out, they could bang the lids of the desks if they were careless or angry, which would be far from helpful to the conduct of business.

That is the sort of place they have on the Continent. Before the war your Uncle Haddock attended a sitting of the French Chamber of Deputies; and he was all against it. It is so big that I do not see how you could make a quiet speech, in a conversational tone. You would have to shout, and wave your arms: and that is not at all the style for Committee work.

And more important still is the *shape*. The shape, Ivy, is not so democratic as ours. I see that you are shocked, and

I will try to explain. Our Chamber, as I said, is oblong: the Government sit on one side and the Opposition party, or parties, sit on the other, facing the Ministers.

'Facing', Richard. That means that the Opposition leaders, and even the wild back-benchers behind them, are only a few yards from the King's Ministers. The rebel firebrand who is speaking can fix the Minister with his fiery eye, and the Minister must meet it: he can shake his fist accusingly and the Minister must suffer quietly: he can say that the Minister is murdering the mothers or grinding the faces of the poor and the Minister must pay attention. Indeed, if he allows his attention to wander for a moment the rebel in withering tones will invite him to lend his ear, however reluctantly, to the plea of those whom he has so shamefully betrayed. And if some other Minister whispers a humorous comment and he is incautious enough to smile, the speaker will bitterly observe that it is easy for well-fed Ministers to laugh, but to him at least the starving of the poor is a serious matter, so will the Minister kindly take that smile off his face? You see what I mean, Richard? Those who are enemies, political enemies, meet each other as enemies should, face to face. Which is often a nuisance, but jolly democratic.

Now, in the Chamber of Deputies it is quite different. Are you awake, Ivy? One day, perhaps, you will be secretary to a Public Man, and you will astonish him with your acumen and information. Well, the French Ministers sit in the front row of the stalls, as it were, in the middle of the semicircle. They face the Chairman, who is on the stage, so to speak: but they have their backs to all the back-benchers, who rise in many rows up the mountain. At the end of the sitting a little but rebellious and indignant back-bencher got up in the very top row of the dress circle.

He was very angry about something. He shouted. He waved his arms. He shook his fist. But the Ministers were miles below him. They had their backs to him. They chatted happily, and exchanged their jokes. They did not pay the smallest attention to the little man. I do not think that any one did. The place was too big: and it was the wrong shape.

You see the difference, Richard? Over there the 'back-bencher' really is a 'back-bencher'. But here he can meet the Ministers on (almost) equal terms.

Where they have a semicircular Chamber like that they talk about the Parties of the Right and the Parties of the Left, according to the side they sit. Some of our reformers have begun to talk like that, and that is one reason why they would like to have a dress circle instead of a Chamber.

I would explain all this if I had time, Ivy, except that I think that it is rather nonsense, and pretty un-English. Certainly, it has not produced so high a state of happiness on the Continent that we need be madly keen on having it here. The general idea, however, is that people like Conservatives sit on the right and people like Radicals or Socialists on the left. That may mean something in their semicircular Continental Chambers where they arrange their seats geographically, according to their opinions. But in our Chamber we seat ourselves according to the state of the parties: and our Chamber, as I have told you, is *not* semicircular but oblong. The party in a majority, the party which provides the King's Government, sits on the *right* of the Speaker, and His Majesty's Opposition sits on his *left*—however 'right' their opinions. So to-day (1945) the Socialists, some of whom call themselves 'Left', sit on the Speaker's *right*. Certain knowing grown-ups, if they had heard me tell you that all this Left and Right was 'pretty un-English' would have laughed in a superior manner. But you will begin to see what I mean. The talk does not fit the facts.

And there is more than that. This Left-and-Right leads to loose talk and vague thinking. When you are told that Mr. Smith belongs to the Conservatives, the Farmers', or the Labour Party, you have some idea of what he thinks and wants to do. But if you are told that he is 'Left' or 'Left-Wing', it does not help you much unless you are told where the Centre is, or what he is Left-Wing *of*. And when I am told that Mr. Popoulos, the Greek politician, is a little to the

Left of Mr. Skopopoulos, I have no more notion ~~what~~ it means than the man in the moon.

Lastly (you will be glad to hear, children), this Left and Right talk belongs to a state of affairs which we have never seen in this country—and never will, I hope: the state of Innumerable Parties. When you have innumerable parties, as they have in France and elsewhere, no one can be bothered to remember all their names, and it is easier to group them among the 'Left' and the 'Right'—just as one calls Chiswick, Hammersmith, Chelsea, and Kensington *West* London, and Whitechapel, Poplar, Stepney, and Lewisham *East*. But in this country we have generally had *two* main parties only, and never more than three (I do not myself think that three is too many): so that Left and Right is not only misleading, but unnecessary. Do you follow? No—well, I cannot say it again.

Still worse, in my humble opinion, than the state of innumerable parties, is the state of *one party*, which they had in Germany and have in Russia still. In this old-fashioned country, after all, if a man ceases to believe in the party to which he belongs, he can change his mind, and transfer himself to another party. Many have done this, and many are doing it now. Why not? The whole point of politics in a free country is that any one may try to persuade any one else to change his mind: and that is why so many speeches are made. But where there is only one party you cannot join another: and it is therefore not much use to try to persuade any one that the party is wrong. What is worse, it is very dangerous: and I had better say no more about it.

Now, Richard (we will not wake up little Ivy), go back in your mind to what we said about the oblong and the semi-circular Chamber: and you will see perhaps how important it ~~was~~.

X

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, I will now tell you something about Parliamentary privilege.

The word 'privilege' means 'private law', and you may at once acutely remark that it is contrary to our accepted democratic thingummy to have private laws—laws, that is, which are not equal for everybody. That is perfectly true, and that is just the reason why Parliamentary privileges have been much cut down. Those which remain are considered necessary to enable the Members to do their duty as well as possible, and not to give them an easy time.

For example, Richard, one day you shall come to the House when Parliament is sitting, and you will see the nice policeman outside stop the traffic for your Uncle Haddock, that he may cross the road at once. This does not mean that your Uncle or any other Member is a specially important person: what is thought to be important is that all the Members should be able to reach the House as quickly as possible. They may have a Question to ask or be just in time to vote, or move an amendment. So at the beginning of each Session a Resolution is passed ordering the police to keep all the streets and approaches open for the Members.

The first time the traffic was stopped for him your Uncle Haddock blushed all over and ran across the road like a frightened hare. He has got used to it now, and goes over with greater dignity; but when he sees two great motor buses and a six-ton lorry brought up on their haunches for him he still wonders what the drivers are saying.

A more important privilege is the right of free speech. No person outside can have the law on any Member for anything he says in the Chamber. If I say that the editor of *The Times* is a burglar, or that the Bishop of London poisoned his wife, those gentlemen would have no remedy but to write indignant letters about it.

Mind you, our speech is not absolutely free. Far from it.

We are, very properly, restrained by our own rules and customs. For one thing, I must not say that the editor of *The Times* is a burglar unless it is relevant to the subject under debate. And I must not go on saying it, for that would be 'tedious repetition'. I must not reflect on the conduct of the King, or even foreign kings (if they are friendly), or the Viceroy of India, the judges, and other high authorities.

And I may be discouraged by the House if I abuse our privilege and make what seems to be a merely spiteful attack upon some one outside who cannot well defend himself. Some friend of the editor will find some opportunity to raise the matter again and challenge me to prove that he is a burglar. Sometimes people say, 'Say it outside!' meaning that if it is true I should not be afraid to face a libel action in a court of law. But that is rather a silly challenge. For one cannot always be sure; and the whole point of the privilege is that a Member should be able to attack abuses, without fear or favour, even when, outside, he would not be sure of winning a libel action. It is like giving a man a parachute and inviting him to jump without it.

Also, as your Uncle Haddock has found, you may be quite willing to 'say it outside', but cannot get any paper to print it. As long as they print what was said in Parliament the papers are privileged too. But if I 'say it outside' in their columns they may have to pay damages too. So they are not always so keen on 'saying it outside'.

There is another privilege which has at least an academic interest for many of the Members. That is, the Houses of Parliament are not bound by the Licensing Laws, the laws which govern the sale and consumption of wine, spirits and beer. These foods can be sold there without a justices' licence and without observing the 'permitted hours' prescribed by Parliament or the local justices.

There used to be some doubt about this particular privilege; but it is now well established, and, as a matter of fact, your Uncle Haddock had a good deal to do with it.

Long before the war—and some time before your Uncle became a horrid politician—he did a rather unusual thing.

He prosecuted the House of Commons Kitchen Committee for selling what is called 'drink' without a licence. This is not so easy as it sounds. However little reverence you may have for the House of Commons when you are engaged in private conversation in the saloon bar, believe me, it requires some resolution to go to Bow Street Police Court in cold blood early on a Monday morning to 'lay an information' against that illustrious body for selling drink without a licence.

This quaint action, children, was not conceived or carried out in a spirit of unworthy spite or envy. It was founded on the hope, perhaps a trifle optimistic¹ and even naïve, as they say, that if Parliament was shown by the Courts to be breaking the laws Parliament would see the folly of the laws and alter them, to the general benefit.

However, this was not to be. The case, in the end, came before a strong Divisional Court (the top court of appeal for such a case), consisting of Lord Hewart, Mister Justice Avory, and Mister Justice Rigby Swift (all, alas, now dead). The Attorney-General appeared for the King against your poor old Uncle, who was gallantly represented by Mister Henry Strauss, once Under-Secretary to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. These three fine judges, as your Uncle is now delighted to recall, unanimously decided against him. Why, Ivy? Not because Parliament meets in a Royal Palace, or any nonsense of that sort. No—because of Parliamentary privilege; because Parliament must have everything necessary for its difficult task. 'Every privilege' said Lord Hewart, 'which is necessary for the discharge of that high trust is conceded without a murmur or a doubt'. I should not myself like to bet a bag of sovereigns on the last assertion. But there it is—the law is now established through the rash act of your Uncle; and if no other tears are shed upon his grave, I hope that Members of Parliament and their guests may muster one or two for this good cause.

And, by the way, Lord Hewart, although he found against

¹'Optimist'—optimus—'best'—Latin: One who tends to hope for the best.

your Uncle on the point of law, did not give costs against him, much to the astonishment and dismay of the Crown. That is to say, in view of earlier proceedings, the Judge agreed that the point had been dubious, and it was proper for the action to be brought.¹ Never, I think, was the House of Commons prosecuted by a private citizen for so small a charge.

It is accordingly the law to-day that the Licensing Laws are quite inapplicable to the Houses of Parliament, that because of the importance of their work they should be able to refresh themselves whenever they desire. And one day, it is to be hoped, this highly civilized doctrine may be extended to the lower orders of British life.

¹ See pages 94-95.

XI

LAST TIME, Richard, we were talking about privilege; and I told you that the idea of that was not to exalt the individual Members but to enable them all to do their duties without fear or favour.

For instance, there are still some interesting remnants of the old days when there was trouble between the Monarch and Parliament. They seem to be only museum pieces now, some of them; but you never know: and it is just as well that they should be preserved, however silly they seem to the spectator, who does not remember how important they used to be, and in theory might be again.

At the opening of every Session the faithful Commons troop to the Bar of the House of Lords and there, in a somewhat undignified huddle, listen to the Gracious Speech from the Throne, announcing the various Measures which the King's Ministers intend to lay before them. They then return to their own place where the Speaker reads the Gracious Speech again. But before that some Bill, as a rule the Outlawries Bill, is formally read a first time and ordered to be read a second time. The point of this is to make it clear that the faithful Commons claim the right to choose their own subjects for deliberation whatever Measures the King's Ministers may have in mind.

Well, that is all very right and proper, but as a matter of fact this is one of the few things which, in the humble judgment of your Uncle Haddock, do seem to be rather silly, not in principle, but in execution. It would be all very well for the Commons to insist on dealing with their own Bill first, if it was a real Bill and they really dealt with it. But it is not a real Bill, and they do not deal with it at all. I have spent some time recently trying to find out what the Outlawries Bill is all about. I find from the Order Paper that it is duly read a first time (that is, introduced) on the first day of the present Session and 'ordered to be read a second time', but

not to be printed. I find from the 'Long Title' that it is a Bill for the more effectual prevention of clandestine outlawries. I find, further, after some research in the Library, that in 1878 outlawry was abolished in civil causes, and so late as 1938 it was abolished in all other causes. So that if clandestine outlawry (whatever that may be) is still going on, it is pretty bizarre, and something of a scandal, and you would expect Parliament to dash the Bill through all its stages with all the dispatch and vigour of which it is capable.

But what happens in fact? The Commons order it to be read a second time, Session after Session, but make no protest when it is not. And since they do not order it to be printed, no man can read it and find out what it says. It does not appear on the Order Paper with the other Bills which the Government proposes to lay before the House as time and opportunity serve, so it is forgotten. And all the time, presumably, the horrid business of clandestine outlawry continues unabated and unashamed.

What is clandestine outlawry, Ivy? Well, as I have told you, through no fault of my own, I am unable to tell you much about this thing. I have met one or two veteran Members who declare that long ago they saw, with their own eyes, the tattered and dirty document which is the only existing copy of the Outlawries Bill. But even they could not remember what it said. So I can only guess.

But, as a rule, if you are declared an outlaw by the State you have to flee the country, you lose all civil rights, you are turned out of your clubs, you can be shot at sight by any one, and that sort of thing. But how all this can be done in a clandestine (or secret) manner is more than I can tell you: because, for example, how is any one to know that you are a person who can be shot at sight unless the fact is made pretty public? Also, how any outlaw is to flee the country in these days is beyond me; it is difficult enough to get out if you have the permission and co-operation of all the relevant authorities.

So, as I say, the mystery is profound. It is not even clear who introduced the Bill. As a rule the names of one or two Ministers principally interested in a Bill are printed on the

back (that is called 'backing' a Bill), and the name of the Minister principally responsible is on the record. But here there is no record. The Outlawries Bill simply appears from nowhere and disappears in the same direction; and for all I know it was introduced by the Queen of the Fairies.

And there is another queer thing. The point of the Outlawries Bill, as I explained, is to confirm and keep alive the claim of the Commons to discuss what they like, whatever the King and the King's Ministers may want them to discuss or do. But, ever since the War began, no sooner has the Outlawries Bill been read a first time and ordered to be read a second time than the Government demands, and the Commons loyally but sheepishly concede, that the Government shall take all Parliamentary time, that private Members' time shall be taken away and, in other words, that the Commons shall *not* be allowed to discuss what they like, but may only discuss such subjects as are brought before them by the King's Ministers. So that in war-time it might be said that it was a waste of time to give to the Outlawries Bill even so much attention as is involved in the imaginary reading of an imaginary Bill.

Your Uncle Haddock does not agree. It is well worth while to keep alive these constitutional rights-of-way: for who knows when they will be suddenly denied if they are allowed to be forgotten. What your Uncle does maintain is that they should be kept alive in a more serious and realistic manner. In this case, for example, why be content to begin the proceedings of the Session with a formal imaginary Bill which it is not intended to carry any farther? At the opening of a Session there are lots of real Bills ready—or there should be. Why not put down one of them for the first day—if it is only the 'Crossing Sweepers (Co-ordination) Bill'?

I could give you another example if I thought that you were more interested than you look. Ever since King Charles the First rudely interrupted the proceedings of the Commons—being, if I remember rightly, in pursuit of the Five Members, or somebody—ever since then, I repeat, Ivy dear—stop chewing, Richard!—the Commons, without being rude, have

carefully but firmly insisted that no outsider, not even His Majesty, may enter their place during their proceedings.

Now, from time to time, it is necessary for His Majesty to send a message to the Commons—for example, when it is desired that the Commons shall attend in the House of Lords to hear the Royal Assent given to certain Bills which have passed through both Houses. Such messages are brought by an officer of the House of Lords called (delightfully, you will agree) the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, commonly known as 'Black Rod'.

'Black Rod', nobly dressed in knee-breeches and so on, marches slowly with dignity and grace from one House to another, bearing the King's message. But as he approaches the House of Commons he is espied, as if an enemy, the door is shut in his face, and somebody (I forget who) cries 'Who goes there?'

Black Rod hammers on the door, announces his identity and is graciously admitted. Even then he behaves with great respect to the Speaker and the House and bows three times before he announces the purpose of his visit.

Well, now, all this is all very well. But just when Black Rod approaches the House of Commons your poor Uncle Haddock is on his feet, approaching the end of an important speech about the Future of Newfoundland, and fumbling for his peroration. What is a peroration, Ivy? It is the Finish-off of a speech and ought to be better than the bit before. And whether it is Newfoundland or whatnot you may bet your boots, children, that as soon as your poor old Uncle begins to fumble for his peroration, the purport of which he has forgotten, there will be loud hammerings somewhere and cries of 'Order! Order!' Your Uncle, wondering what he has done wrong, now looks anxiously in all directions, suddenly perceives Black Rod advancing up the Floor, and sits down hastily, dutifully, but not wholly gratified. The Members, led by the Speaker, then go to the House of Lords; and when they return about ten minutes later your Uncle has to start again. But by this time those who were there before (if any) have forgotten what it was all about.

And *all* your Uncle humbly suggests is this: Preserve, by all means, the ancient forms and ceremonies, but let them be *real*. In other words, when Black Rod approaches, let some one cry 'Wait, sir, wait! In good time we shall be glad to see you. But Mister Haddock is now fumbling for his peroration. And Heaven knows when that will be over.'

XII

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, I am going to talk to you about talking, about talking in the House of Commons, which is not, as some suppose, an easy or enjoyable thing to do.

Macaulay said, 'There is not a more terrible audience in the world,' and there is abundant evidence to that effect. Another historian, Mister Edward Gibbon, who was a master of language, at least on paper, sat in that House for eight years but never opened his mouth. 'It is more tremendous than I imagined,' he said. 'The great speakers fill me with despair; the bad ones with terror.' So after eight years he went away and wrote the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

John Bright said, 'I suppose I ought to be ashamed of myself, but the fact is I never rise in the House without a trembling at the knees and a secret wish that somebody else would catch the Speaker's eye and enable me to sit down again.' Sir Austen Chamberlain, a veteran and respected statesman, said to your Uncle, not long before he died, 'I never rise in that House without a sinking feeling at the pit of my stomach.' Disraeli called it the most chilling and nerve-destroying audience in the world.

If this is the opinion of the great men, imagine the agonies of the small fry, especially the new-comer making his first, or 'maiden' speech, as it is called.

Great indulgence is shown to a maiden speaker. He can choose his time and speak almost when he likes. As long as he is modest and unprovocative the House will listen politely, and later speakers will not argue with him but pay him compliments.

You may know all this, but you may still feel like Lord North's son, who said, 'I brought out two or three sentences, when a mist seemed to rise before my eyes. I then lost my recollection, and could see nothing but the Speaker's wig, which swelled and swelled and swelled till it covered the

whole House. I then sank back on my seat and never attempted another speech, but quickly accepted the Chiltern Hundreds' (which means to say, he resigned).

A Mister Whiteside, an Irish Member, said that when he saw the Speaker's wig surrounded by blue flames he knew it was time to sit down.

The famous Parnell was 'painfully nervous'. He could only stammer out a few barely intelligible sentences. Mister Gladstone's maiden speech was reported thus: 'Mister Gladstone made a few remarks which were not audible in the Gallery.' More than one Member, like Mister Gibson Craig, have had to sit down without saying a word. 'He rose,' wrote Disraeli, 'stared like a stuck pig and said nothing. His friends cheered: he stammered; all cheered; then there was a dead and awful pause, and then he sat down, and that was his performance.'

Addison, the celebrated essayist, was a failure, like many other writers, and made but one attempt to speak. And Steele was howled down with cries of 'The Tatler!' by the Tories, because he had ridiculed them in his writings. 'He fancies', they said, 'that because he can scribble he can address an assembly of gentlemen. Out upon him!' After Sheridan's 'maiden' a reporter said, 'You had much better have stuck to your former pursuits.' Some one else said, 'Nature never intended him for an orator.' Yet he became one of the best. Byron's 'maiden', in the Lords, was a success.

William Pitt the Younger and Sir Robert Peel both rang the bell with a bang the first time; and Pitt was only twenty-one.

Not every maiden speech has been modest and unprovocative. Lord Birkenhead, in his triumphant and celebrated first innings, knocked all the bowlers all round the field.

Disraeli is another famous example. But according to the interesting work by Michael MacDonagh¹ from which I have extracted most of this information, with many thanks, the common account does not do Disraeli justice. It was not only his irritating self-assurance, foppish attire and affected

¹ *Parliament: Its Romance; Its Comedy; Its Pathos* (1902), P. S. King.

gestures that caused the trouble. He had a bitter enemy in the House, Daniel O'Connell: and it was he who led the Radicals and Irish Repealers in roars of ironical¹ laughter and disconcerting cries.

Disraeli gave up at last, saying, 'Though I sit down now, the time will come when you will hear me.' Which was pretty accurate. But a shrewd Irish orator, Mister Sheil, maintained that the speech was not a failure. 'If there had not been this interruption Mister Disraeli might have made a failure. I don't call this a failure, it is a crush. My début was a failure, because I was heard; but my reception was supercilious,² his malignant. A début should be dull. The House will not allow a man to be a wit and an orator unless they have the credit of finding it out. There it is.'

And he gave the young man some bizarre but sound advice: 'Now get rid of your genius for a Session. Speak often, for you must not show yourself cowed, but speak shortly. Be very quiet. Try to be dull, only argue and reason imperfectly, for if you speak with precision they will think you are trying to be witty. Astonish them by speaking on subjects of detail. Quote figures, dates, calculations, and in a short time the House will sigh for the wit and eloquence which they all know are in you. They will encourage you to pour them forth, and then you will have the ear of the House and be a favourite.' Disraeli followed the advice, and, as you may know, with pretty good results.

Another good piece of advice which all the old hands give to the new entry is: 'Do not speak too soon. Sit in the Chamber and listen and watch. Learn the ways of the House, what can be said, and how to say it.' But Daniel O'Connell and William Cobbett both made their 'maidens' the night they took their seats. Cobbett, after some of the top Members had spoken, began with the following not wholly conciliatory sentence: 'It appears to me that since I have been sitting

¹ 'Ironical'—ἐῖρωνικός—Greek: 'dissembling, putting on a feigned ignorance'. They were laughing *at*, not *with* the speaker.

² 'Supercilious'—from 'supercilium', Latin: 'eyebrow'. Haughtily contemptuous.

here I have heard a great deal of vain and unprofitable conversation.'

Your Uncle Haddock was not quite so naughty as that, but he did 'break his duck' on his second night and opposed a motion by the Prime Minister. Mister Winston Churchill made a characteristic comment on that ill-timed but not wholly fruitless oration. After paying your poor Uncle some soothing compliments, he said: 'Call that a maiden speech? It was a brazen hussy of a speech. Never did such a painted lady of a speech parade itself before a modest Parliament.'

But why, you rightly ask, Ivy dear, is it so alarming and difficult to stand up in the House of Commons and speak the truth that is in you?

Well, I think there are two sets of reasons, one physical and the other, so to speak, spiritual. A back-bencher speaking in the House feels very much alone. There is no table before him as there is at a public dinner or meeting, on which he can rest his notes or papers. (This is where the Ministers score; for they can lean upon the Dispatch Box and read their speeches without giving themselves away.) He is supposed to address the Speaker, and not to turn away from him. But, in fact, his audience is all over the place. Members before, below, about and behind him, and visitors and—rather important—reporters, far above. And the Member's audience is always moving about, coming and going; even those who 'stay put' may be happily engaged in private conversations—unless the speaker can make so good a speech as to arrest their attention, and very few Members would bet about that.

That brings me, Ivy, to the spiritual reasons. Whatever jokes you may make about the H. of C., the fact remains that it is a pretty formidable body—simply because it is a miniature—a small picture, Ivy—or, as some folk would say, a cross-section of the people. We may not all be philosophers or senior wranglers, which is just as well: but you can mention scarcely any subject in the world without some Member shyly coming forward and revealing that he knows all about it, whether it is the Battle of Waterloo, the keeping of bees, or how to make a bowline. Well, now, for

many years (in your pubs and clubs) you may have maintained without contradiction that all cows have five legs. But when you rise to make the same assertion in the House of Commons you have to recognize that there are six hundred and thirty-eight¹ other Members, any one of whom may rudely rise to say that he knows more about cows than you do.

Furthermore, you have been chosen by the people, and summoned by the King, to assist at an ancient and unique assembly, and, naturally, wish to do your best. So, what with one thing and another, it is no wonder that one has a sinking feeling in the pit of the stomach.

¹ Not counting the Speaker.

XIII

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, prepare yourselves for a shock. This, I think, will be almost the last time I address you about Parliament and all that. And, by the way, perhaps I should now disclose to you that all these little talks have been taken down in shorthand by the good Miss Fish to be put in a book for the benefit of other children. If it makes them sleep as well as Ivy it will have done some good.

Well, last time we talked about talking in the House of Commons. After the talking comes the voting—unless all is agreed, and then there is no point in voting. The Speaker reads the Question, and says, 'Will those of that opinion say "Aye"?'—which means 'Yes'. We all say 'Aye' and the Question is decided.

When the Members do not agree and there is a vote the House is said to 'divide' and there is a 'division'.

Now, let us take one of the big debates in the last Parliament, on the Yalta Agreement. This was a debate of cosmic importance, a debate conducted with dignity and distinction, a debate—What is 'cosmic', Ivy? Well, perhaps, I was exaggerating, because the 'cosmos' means the universe, and I was thinking only of the small planet called Earth. But it is true to say that things said and done (and not said or done) in the House of Commons in those three days may affect the lives of men and women all over the world for a very long time. And, remembering that, no sensible man who heard and saw the debate could agree that that old Parliament, then in its tenth year, was a mere exhausted 'rump', unworthy of respect. As Mister Churchill might have said, 'Some rump!'

During the debate there were two 'divisions', or votes, and I must tell you a little about them. Now, here is a queer thing. One of the most highly prized rights of the people is the Secret Ballot, which means to say that no one must know how the citizen votes at an Election. If any Member tried to

find out how any of his constituents voted there would be no end of a row. But in Parliament the voting is public; and I believe the electors would be highly indignant if it was suggested that their Members should enjoy the right of Secret Ballot. Logically, it is not easy to say why: for the point of the Secret Ballot is to ensure that men shall vote without fear or favour, according to their judgment and conscience, and one would say that Members of Parliament should do that too. However, let us see what happens.

At the end of the debate the Speaker reads again the words of the motion, resolution, or amendment, and says, 'Will those of that opinion say "Aye"?' (He listens while some cry 'Aye!') 'Contrary, "No"?' ('No!') 'I think the "Ayes" have it', he says. ('No!' cry the others.) After a bit of this (it is called 'collecting the voices') he says 'Clear the lobbies'. Then the bells ring all over the House, and the policemen cry 'Divi-zhern!' to summon the Members from other parts of the building. At the end of, I think, two minutes the Speaker puts the Question again, in case those who challenged a division have thought better of it. If so the division is off; but if they cry 'No' again it is 'on', and somehow or other the number of 'Ayes' and 'Noes' must be counted, so each side appoints two 'tellers' or counters.

At this point the scientific reformer is inclined to put his ugly snout in. 'Surely,' he says, 'each Member should have a desk with two buttons, "Aye" and "No", by which he could record his vote electrically without leaving his place. Or perhaps he should have a black and a white ball—or small cards like the French Deputies: he could drop his ball or card into an urn brought round to him, or perhaps dispatch it to the counting place by a mechanical device such as they have in drapers' shops. Then the voting would be both swift and secret.'

Well, in the old days, I believe, the Members stood up in their places and were counted by the tellers, which may have been swifter, but was not secret. To-day there are two 'lobbies', 'Aye' and 'No', through which the Members walk, often in a rather insanitary crowd. At the far end their names

are ticked off on a printed list, and outside are two tellers (one from each side) who count the sheep as they go through the gate.

Now, before they enter the Lobby they can be waylaid by Whips or by companions, persuading them to vote as desired—a thing that would never happen outside the polling-booths. And when they have voted not only does everybody in Parliament know which side they were, but their names are printed in the Official Report for all the world to see. So, if you change your mind, as sensible men do, and decide that after all, cows have four legs only, some ass may point out that five years ago you voted for their having five, and therefore you are inconsistent and untrustworthy.

Also, you may be most unjustly pilloried in the newspapers. For instance, on the day I have in mind, twenty-five Members voted against the Government in the big debate, as they were quite entitled to do. As things turned out it was rather a good thing, though if a hundred Members had done the same it would have been a bad thing, as it might have brought down the Government. But the point is that they were very genuinely anxious about the Poles, as many others were: and it was most improper of some papers to say 'Here is a list of the wreckers of Yalta, the enemies of Russia venting their spite', and so forth. So long as every man's vote is not merely published but pickled, so to speak, these things will happen.

But such are the trials of public life, Ivy, dear; and if you ask me, after all this, if I should like to see secret voting in Parliament I should say 'On the whole, no'. On the whole, it makes for honesty—and stability. It is all very well to say that weak men may be intimidated or over-persuaded, but Members are not so feeble as all that: and if a man knows that his vote is to be public he is more likely, not less, to give due thought to the operation, and will not vote for a whim.

I do not think that on the big things—on Munich or Yalta, for example—it would make the smallest difference, for every man then will make his own decision with anxious and agonizing care. But on some smaller things it might; small

things where a man is against his party, or perhaps against some vocal minority of his constituents—Sunday Cinemas or Local Option, for example—or perhaps does not much care, one way or another, but is persuaded by the speeches. Well, now, that might often be a good thing. But how do you think it would affect the Party system, Ivy, dear? We agreed that the Party system was, on the whole, a good and necessary thing. But could it be kept going if any man might break away, at any time without having to expose, or explain himself? I cannot tell. Nor is it for a mere Independent to try. But it may well be that secret voting has contributed something to the political instability of certain foreign countries.

XIV

NOW, RICHARD and Ivy, we are really going to make an end. You have both been very good children—except for Richard's repulsive chewing, where do you get the stuff?—and I tell you what I am going to do. I am going to get you made Associates of the Hansard Society, and I am going to pay for a copy of *Hansard* to be sent to you every day that Parliament sits.

What is *Hansard*, Ivy, dear? *Hansard* is the Official Report of the Proceedings of Parliament, and the Hansard Society¹ exists to spread the light concerning those proceedings.

It is not the fault of the newspapers, who are always short of space, and sometimes are hard pressed to do justice to a good murder; but their reports of our proceedings are often inadequate and even misleading. Even those which make a real effort cannot find space for more than a fraction of what is said, and summaries and extracts, however skilfully made, may give a wrong impression. Many a long, well-thought-out, interesting and effective speech, especially if it is made late in the sitting, can get no more notice than 'Mister Bottle also spoke'. But any brief remark that is very laughable or exceptionally silly naturally attracts attention and tends to be reported, so it is not surprising that to readers of the more popular papers the House of Commons sometimes sounds like a cross between Handley and Hanwell—I mean, Ivy, dear, between raving lunacy and hired buffoonery.

But in *Hansard* every word that everybody speaks is printed—and printed in the first person. This was not always so. In fact, the Reports in their present form did not begin till 1909. In the old days, queerly enough, Parliament did not *like* to have its proceedings fully reported; chiefly, I think, because it was sometimes inconvenient for Ministers to be reminded of their undertakings and pronouncements. But now it is quite the other way. It is thought, and rightly, that

¹ Secretary, 804 Hood, Dolphin Square, London, S.W.1.

the more the people know about the place the more they will respect it. Many citizens, after reading *Hansard* for the first time, have confessed they were astonished to find that there were so many sane Members and that so many sensible and interesting things were said.

Apart from that, it is, technically, a very remarkable production. On an ordinary Parliamentary day about fifty thousand words will be spoken, not counting Questions; and including Questions, the day's Report will cover about a hundred pages. Now, these words are not calmly dictated in a study to a secretary. The reporter is up in the Gallery and the speakers are far away on the floor of the House. Some of them speak very fast; some have not good voices; some turn their backs upon the Gallery in the middle of a sentence; some do not finish their sentences properly and use bizarre grammatical constructions; some make quotations from documents which are difficult to catch but must be correctly recorded; some are even so lost to decency as to use a Latin tag. Then there are interruptions and interjections, sometimes more than one at a time; points of order are raised and the Speaker gives a ruling, not very loudly. If a speaker vaguely refers to 'my honourable Friend' the poor reporter must find out the name and constituency of the Member and put it in brackets, and he must identify anyone who pops in an interjection if he can. Altogether it is no enviable job to make out what was said and get it all down.

When the reporters cannot hear what is said clearly they invite the Member to go up and correct their typewritten report before it goes to the printers, and he realizes what a jigsaw of a job they have. A speaker may not, when so invited, improve upon what he actually said, except in points of grammar and so on. He may, if he feels inclined, weld a split infinitive or bring back to earth a *nominativus pendens*—What is that Ivy, dear? I am sorry, but it is too complicated to explain now. I withdraw the expression—But, as I was saying, he may not insert the brilliant witticism which, in fact, he forgot to utter; nor may he expunge the numerous and unexpected errors of tact or taste or judgment which he

made. So that the business of correcting a speech just made in the Official Reporters' room is not a happy one. All the poor Member can do is to make his *faux pas* fairly grammatical.

But in spite of all these troubles and difficulties to-day's Report, a little book in a paper cover, is all ready early next morning. In the old days of peace your Uncle Haddock would leave the House at half-past eleven or twelve and totter home to Hammersmith, and there on his breakfast table next morning would be the full report of the day's proceedings, including sometimes the last speech he heard delivered. How it was done, and how it got there, he has no idea. There must, he thinks, be some sort of fairy attached to the House of Commons.

Well, read your *Hansard*, Richard and Ivy; for if you do, I think you will feel more kindly towards the 'talking-shop' and the loathly politicians than you did before. We are a very human assembly. Chosen by the citizens all over the United Kingdom, how could we be anything else? I wish I could take you to the famous Smoking Room, which is perhaps the most important room in the building—perhaps in the Empire: and you would see how human we are.

Many high-minded jests are made about this room, about the Members sitting smoking and drinking there when they ought to be in the Chamber, and so on. This is really the most infantile nonsense, children. I have already explained that there is not the smallest reason why all the Members should be in the Chamber while the Breeding of Bees Bill is being discussed. Those who know and care about bees will be there; and that is enough. Other and greater matters are brewing: and more things brew in the Smoking Room than anywhere else. If you could peep in and see the animated crowd one evening when the Room is full, you might think, 'This is just a pleasure party, such as you might see in any club'. But you would be wrong. If you could miraculously hear all the conversations you would find that nearly all of them are about 'shop' of some sort or another—general politics, particular Bills, or current controversies, party prospects, Parliamentary personalities and plans. There may

be here and there a group which is wickedly discussing the things of ordinary life; but every few minutes they will be interrupted by some eager Member who wishes them to back an amendment, sign a resolution, or join a committee. Here all the best conspiracies and 'movements' begin. Here the shy new Member can meet and talk with the mighty Minister, listen to his tales and mark his wise advice. Here on friendly terms meet the Whips, not so alarming, and their flock, not so cowed. Here, at times, even Ministers confer together.

Here a million secrets are revealed without fear; for it is an unwritten but venerable tradition that nothing heard in the Smoking Room shall be repeated outside. Here, after a hot debate, you might see those who have been bitterly (and abusively) divided renewing, or forgetting, the arguments with good humour over a (small) gin. Here you may see the Prime Minister himself in genial talk with those who have just opposed a vote of confidence in his Government. Here, in short, you have the queer but precious spirit of the British Parliament, which must not be destroyed. We differ from one another, we may dislike one another; but still we have a fellow-feeling, because we are all (we know not why) engaged in the same difficult business, the government and betterment of man; and we have seen enough of it to recognize that after all the other fellow may be right.

All these things that I have told you about, children, have come into being after hundreds of years of thought and trial in these small islands. The chief point, as I told you, is to settle things by talking and not by fighting or killing. We must not expect to get all other countries to do the same at once. But we are trying. And we shall succeed.

XV

HA, HA, children, you thought we had finished, did not you? Well, so did I. But I have now been reminded of some miscellaneous matters which must not be ignored.

For instance, I realize with horror and dismay, I have said nothing about that important object, the Mace.

And mention of the Mace reminds me that we have not tackled the odious subject of Money.

That is not surprising; for, to tell the truth (as your Uncle always does), he has always been a little vague about the odious business of public money. (There is, for example, an Awful Thing called the Consolidated Fund, which terrifies him.) But it is deplorable, none the less. For the getting and spending of public money is really the first business of Parliament. And it is a bizarre sign of the times that many Members, and all the people, think very little about that.

Probably, Richard, at the delightful school to which, I am glad to say, you will be returning soon, you have dimly heard some admirable master mutter wearily the words 'Grievances before Supply'. But I will bet you a yard of chewing-gum that you have not the faintest notion what it means.

Well, in a way it is the opposite of 'Guns before Butter', which is what Goering said to the Germans long ago. Here, in theory at least, Parliament—or rather the House of Commons—says to the King and his Ministers, 'Butter before Guns'. That is to say: 'The people have not enough butter (that is the 'grievance') and unless you see that they have enough butter we will not vote any money to buy guns for your Army and Navy' (that is 'supply').

Put like that, it sounds a little rude and even rebellious; but that is the Constitution. And, whether you think it is rude or not, it is strikingly different from 'Guns before Butter'.

And, of course, this is no mere antique remnant of the past. 'Butter before Guns' has been said here, quite recently. Not

so long before the last war with Germany the Ministers reluctantly decided that they must build up the nation's armaments again, and asked the Commons to vote more money for that purpose. And many representatives of the people replied: 'Oh, no, it would be a monstrous thing to spend so much money on the forces of destruction when you are failing to sustain or succour the poor mothers and their starving children. And, anyhow, your foreign policy is unethical and anaemic.' So, many times, they voted against 'supply', fortunately without effect, because there were not enough of them.

Note, by the way, children, that these Members had no power to *propose* the expenditure of more money on butter. They could only *refuse* to vote more money for guns.

Having said that, I believe that in this brief but vivid sketch I have touched on all the essential features of the Money arrangements. Let us now try to make them clearer. Like many other things, it may sound pretty bizarre and muddled, but in fact it is jolly scientific and sound.

All doings—or, as we say, proceedings—about getting or spending public money must start in the House of Commons. That is to say, the King's Ministers cannot pop up in the House of Lords and ask Parliament to vote more money for battleships or tanks; for the Lords have no power to accept such a proposal on their own. Nor can the poor peers propose that the income-tax shall be five shillings only, or effectively object if the Commons say that it shall be fifteen. Partly by ancient rules of the Constitution, and partly by the Parliament Act, 1911, the Lords are out of the Money business altogether.

But even the mighty Commons do not have it all their own way—and for a very good reason, as you will see.

What happens is this, Ivy, dear. The Crown—that is, the King—through his Ministers, demands Money—shall we say a million pounds, which is, shall we say, the sum 'estimated' as necessary to build or buy a battleship. The Commons grant a million pounds (or not). That is to say, they agree to 'supply' it. And this they do in the Committee of Supply.

'The Lords assent to it formally; but they cannot do anything else.

Note, however, Richard—and stop chewing—that no private Member of the House of Commons can pop up and say: 'I propose that we give the King a million pounds to buy a battleship.' Such a proposal can only be made in the Commons; but it can only come from the Crown—in other words, the King's Ministers.

But now, you see, Ivy, dear, having promised to 'supply' the million pounds, the Commons have to find the money. And how do they do that? Well, for example, they could put a tax on bicycles, or sell the Isle of Wight, or borrow money from America. (And, by the way, they would do anything like this in the Committee of Ways and Means.) But when I say 'they' I do not mean 'they'—that is, I do not mean the ordinary dogsbodies in the Commons like your Uncle. We have seen already that no 'private' Member can propose to give money to the King. Nor, on the other hand, can he propose or increase a tax upon the people. The Commons can only do these things when led or recommended by the Ministers. All that your Uncle can do on his own is to propose the *reduction* of a tax, or, on the other hand, a pension or subsidy.

'Well,' you may say, Ivy, dear, 'the mighty Commons do not seem to be so mighty after all.' And that is quite right. Nobody in our great Constitution is allowed to be too mighty. And do you not see how sensible the rule is? If every Member could propose an increase in the widows' pensions or the Grand Fleet or the Death Duties, what terrible opportunities there would be for tub-thumping in Parliament and vote-catching outside! No, no, the functions are very cunningly distributed. The Ministers, in money matters, must propose. The Members must agree or refuse. They can always refuse if they choose: but that will mean that they want new Ministers, and a General Election. So both sides have reason to act with responsibility and care.

If you have the faintest interest in the Consolidated Fund, Ivy, dear, it is the fund, or money-box, into which all the

taxes and other sums received by His Majesty, go, and from which all sums expended on the public services come.

I should tell you now that the Committees of Supply and Ways and Means are just the same six hundred and forty Members sitting in the same Chamber, but doing a different job, and under slightly different rules—and a different Chairman. For instance, in Committee you can talk any number of times on the same motion, if the other Members will stand it.

When the House goes into Committee, whether about Money or anything else, the Speaker leaves the Chair, and one of the Chairmen takes his place. The Mace, which is the symbol of the Speaker's authority and presence, is taken off the Table by the Serjeant-at-Arms, and solemnly placed on a bracket under the Table. Exactly why the Speaker goes away when Committee work begins it is not easy now to say. But the first Committees, no doubt, were the Money Committees I have mentioned. The Speaker, though chosen by the Commons, is approved by the King; and in the old days, I believe, the notion was that, the King having demanded Money, the Commons insisted on discussing the matter themselves and would not have any one there who might go off and tell His Majesty what was said. Or, it may be that the Money Committees conferred upstairs, and the Speaker stayed below to manage other things. You must ask your masters about this, Richard.

Anyhow, the Speaker goes away to his fine house by the river. But he cannot go out for a walk or go to the pictures. He must wait there in case the House goes out of Committee or he is summoned to deal with a disturbance. It is a lonely life. He cannot go into the Smoking Room and enjoy the conversation, he cannot even go to a political club: though probably he would not have been chosen if he had not been the kind of man who likes company and is congenial to his fellows. It is not a job your Uncle Haddock is after. But it is a very great office. One day you must come and see the Speaker's Procession. At the beginning of every day he marches slowly through the corridors to the Chamber, the

Serjeant-at-Arms with the Mace before him, his Chaplain and Secretary astern. There are no swords, no bands, or trumpets. Nothing is said but 'Hats off, strangers'. But as the strangers take their hats off and watch the old man in wig and gown go quietly by, they perceive and understand the might and majesty of the British Parliament.

XVI

WELL, RICHARD and Ivy, you have suffered all this talk with admirable politeness, apart from Richard's interminable chews and Ivy's occasional snooze: but still I see in those dumb little eyes the question, '*What* has all this to do with *us*? We are so young; we shall not have a *vote* for many years to come: and even then we shall not be in Parliament.'

No, children: but that matters little. However young, you can be worthy children of your Parliamentary Mamma—Britannia. However young, you can be Parliamentary. But what is that? Well, I should say that to be Parliamentary is to be fair—to be reasonable—and to listen. Little Ivy, Richard, whatever you may think of her opinions, is still one of God's creatures, and is entitled to say what she thinks. Besides, there is always the distant chance that, here and there, she may be right, and, if permitted to speak, may even be able to guide you out of the swamps of error into the bright highway of truth. But she cannot do this if you suppress her shy utterances with rude snorts and laughter, or scornfully refuse to listen. You may be wrong: you should hear the other side. This is perhaps the first rule of thought for a Parliamentary child.

And, long before you get a vote, you should, you will, be taking an interest in Parliament and political affairs. You will learn most about these from the newspapers, or from people who read the newspapers. On that point your Uncle Haddock's advice is: If you can, read more than one paper—and (the same old rule) hear more than one point of view. There are papers, quite rightly, of all shades of opinion—like the chrysanthemums or dahlias. The same piece of news may look quite different in different papers: and in some of them it may not appear at all. People who read only one paper become like people who will not listen: they never hear the other side, and they get fixed ideas, which are not necessarily

sound. How difficult it is, for example, to form a just opinion of the 'rights' of a strike if you read one paper only!

Remember, too, when you read something that somebody has said which makes you bubble with indignation and scorn—remember that you may not have heard the whole story. It is not the newspapers' fault—they have not enough space to print everything that everybody says: but very often a short extract gives a wrong impression, and if you had heard what was said before or after the remark which infuriated you, it might not have sounded so bad.

For example, suppose that in a speech I said 'President Kruger believed to the day of his death that the earth is flat: and without some elementary scientific instruction it is impossible to prove him wrong'.

And suppose that some sub-editor in a hurry wrote:

'EARTH IS FLAT,' says M.P.

You can stop supposing now, because such a thing would never happen: but that extreme and silly example will show you what I mean.

As you grow older, there is no reason why you should not go to the meetings and even help at the Elections. But if you do, you must behave yourselves, and take the thing seriously. If you go to a meeting do not gather round the stove at the end of the hall and crack nuts with your backs to the speakers. If you are not interested, go out: nobody is compelled to attend political meetings. And do not think it part of your duty to throw stones (or even snowballs) at candidates for whom your daddy does not intend to vote. Do not hail their approach with boos and catcalls, tear down their posters, scratch their cars, or write rude messages on the walls. Although your daddy does not see fit to give them his vote they have not committed any crime, so far as you know: they are respectable citizens offering, at some personal inconvenience, to serve their country in Parliament. Whatever barbarous tricks the grown-up electors may be up to you must preserve the dignity of youth.

Later on, when you are twenty-one and have a vote, it will

be proper and right to examine your Member very closely, his public deeds and sayings, and ask yourself: 'Now, is he *really* the right man to represent *me*?' If you decide that he is not, you must not, as some people do, go about moaning, '*How* do such extraordinary people get into Parliament?' The answer is that they get in because the people put them there: and you are, or will be, part of 'the people'. It is not quite so simple as that, I agree. Unless he stands as an Independent, your Mister Smith will have been chosen or, as they say, 'adopted' by one of the parties. Your Uncle Haddock has never been 'adopted', but he believes that it is a long and embarrassing business. There is generally a long list of would-be candidates, each of whom is 'interviewed' by the Selection Committee, and has to explain what he thinks, and sometimes, I believe, how much money he is willing to spend. By degrees, the rivals are 'weeded out', until there is only a 'short list' left. These have to go through still more ordeals, and sometimes address a large meeting in turn, which must be most alarming.

Well, now, if you are a member of the party you can show so much interest and do so much work that one day you will be on the Selection Committee yourself. And, if not, I suppose you can make a nuisance of yourself outside and bring forward better men than Mister Smith if you can find them.

If you do not belong to the winning party, then of course, you cannot do much about getting a better Member. You can only work hard for your own party, and try to see that it has a good candidate, so that it may win next time.

But what, you will say, little Ivy, with your usual acuteness, if you do not belong to *any* party? That, I agree, will make it much more difficult for you to be sure that you have the kind of Member you would like. In theory, of course, you can put up some bright and brainy Independent: and at one of the Universities he may have a very good chance. But in an ordinary (or 'territorial')¹ constituency he will not have a fair chance, unless he is already a well known and favourite

¹ 'territorial'—'terra' (Latin), land: 'belonging to territory or land'.

figure, a popular writer or broadcaster, for example. Even he will have against him the 'machines' (that is, trained workers and regular arrangements for everything) of two parties, perhaps three, each of whom will have more money than he has and probably will have been preparing everything much longer. That is to say, he will not be able to afford to have so many posters and leaflets printed: and when he tries to hire the Town Hall or the Bandstand for a meeting he may find that they have been booked up by the parties on all the important nights. Still, it can be done. There are Mr. Vernon Bartlett, Mr. W. J. Brown, and Mr. Tom Driberg in Parliament now. But two of them, you see, were well-known broadcasters and the other a well-known journalist.

At a University, as I said, it is easier: partly because party feeling is not so strong among the intelligent graduates (you must have taken a degree before you can vote), and partly because a University election is not so expensive and does not require so much organization and 'machinery'. There are no meetings, no posters, no leaflets, no canvassing. All the candidate does is to write an address¹ (or letter) to the electors, get it printed, and send it through the post (if he can find enough envelopes and get them all addressed in time). It is a most civilized arrangement: and in some ways, to some extent, might be copied elsewhere, your Uncle thinks.

So, if you want to get yourself (or any one else) in at a University I should go for Independence. But in any other constituency you will do better, and do more good, inside a party. If you are too high-and-mighty to join a party, very well, but do not expect to have much influence in the election of your Member.

¹ In Appendix Two is a very lengthy address by your Uncle Haddock, which the Editors wish you to see. The addresses sent to you when you have a vote will be much shorter, and you must read them carefully.

XVII

THERE IS another advantage in the University arrangements, apart from the happy accident that all University Members have exceptional beauty, intelligence and charm. That is that they have Fair Voting. Fair Voting is your Uncle's simple name for a thing which is simple really, but not simple to explain. I shall have to use the blackboard: and if Ivy likes to climb a tree during this little lecture, she may. Good girl—she will stay.

Well, the object of a General Election is to find out, roughly, what the people think, and especially which party is supported by the greatest number—or 'majority', as they say. The object here in Burbleton is to find out which party, or which candidate, has a 'majority', that is, more votes than the other man.

The best and simplest form of Election is like this:

	<i>Votes</i>
1. SMITH (Round Earth Party) .	20,000
2. JONES (Flat Earth Party) .	12,000
Majority .	8,000
SMITH is elected.	

But suppose MR. ROBINSON stands as a candidate as well. MR. ROBINSON belongs to the ORANGE EARTH PARTY, that is, he thinks it is shaped like an orange and flat at the top. He disagrees entirely with MR. JONES; he disagrees to some extent with MR. SMITH: but he is much nearer to MR. SMITH than to MR. JONES in his opinions.

Now, suppose this happens:

	<i>Votes</i>
1. JONES (Flat Earth Party) . . .	12,000
2. SMITH (Round Earth Party) . . .	11,000
3. ROBINSON (Orange Earth Party) . . .	9,000
Majority (1 over 2)	1,000
(1 over 3)	3,000

JONES is elected.

You will see at once, you clever children, that this result is not sensible or fair. 20,000 voters (11,000 plus 9,000) are against the Flat Earth Party; and only 12,000 are for it. Yet the Flat Earth Party man is the one who goes to Parliament.

In such a case Mr. Jones is said to have been elected 'by a minority of the votes polled': and Mr. Robinson, by butting in as he did, is said to have 'split' the Anti-Flat Vote, and to have let JONES (Flat) in.

Both the supporters of SMITH (Round) and ROBINSON (Orange) feel 'frustrated'¹ and disappointed. Their votes have not been effective. SMITH's supporters are annoyed with ROBINSON for butting in: and some of ROBINSON's supporters feel that if only they had known that ROBINSON would have been bottom they would have voted for SMITH, for they would much rather have seen SMITH (Round) get in than JONES (Flat).

At the General Election of 1945, if your Uncle Haddock has counted correctly, there were 166 cases like this—166 Members elected on a 'minority' vote, and 4,000,000 'frustrated' electors.

Now, there is a way of avoiding this: but it has never been used in this country. It is called the Alternative Vote.

By this arrangement each voter can have a second choice. That is, he can do this, if he likes, on his voting-paper:

SMITH (Round)	1
ROBINSON (Orange)	2

¹ 'frustra' (Latin): in vain.

After the votes are counted, if no candidate has a 'clear majority'—that is, more votes than the other two put together—they say: 'Well, ROBINSON is bottom. He is out of it. We will take all his voting-papers and see what the second choices of his supporters were.' It is like saying to them: 'Your horse was last: you may have another bet.'

You remember what the figures were:

JONES (Flat)	.	.	.	12,000
SMITH (Round).	.	.	.	11,000
ROBINSON (Orange)	.	.	.	9,000

Well, perhaps 5,000 of ROBINSON's men put SMITH (2) on their papers. Perhaps 1,000 put JONES (2), because they did not like SMITH's face, and were not 'strong party men'. And perhaps 3,000 were such strong party men, and so sure that ROBINSON (Orange) was the only man for them, that they did not give a second choice to any one.

So we add 5,000 to MR. SMITH (Round), which makes him 16,000, and 1,000 to MR. JONES (Flat), which makes him 13,000.

SMITH (Round)	$11,000 + 5,000 = 16,000$	(1)
JONES (Flat)	$12,000 + 1,000 = 13,000$	(2)

SMITH is elected—which is what you wanted, wasn't it, Ivy?

Well, that is what you can do to avoid a 'split vote' and get a fair and sensible result, where there is only one 'seat' (in Parliament) to be filled.

Sometimes there are *two* seats to be filled—Norwich, for example. Every voter has two votes: and, of course, if *six* people stand there may be a 'split vote' in just the same way.

JONES (Flat)	.	.	.	12,000
THOMSON (Flat)	.	.	.	11,998
SMITH (Round).	.	.	.	11,000
ROBERTS (Round)	.	.	.	10,982
ROBINSON (Orange)	.	.	.	9,000
ATKINS (Orange)	.	.	.	8,971

But at the Universities, where, as a rule, there are *two* seats to be filled, there is a different arrangement.

It is called the Single Transferable Vote. Here the voter has only one vote: but he has as many *choices* as there are candidates. Every vote is effective, but only once. I dare say you are fuddled, children: but let us try to see how it works.

This time there are *two* seats to be won: but now we have *four* candidates. Besides our old friends we have MR. WATKINS (Oval Earth Party). He thinks the earth is shaped like an egg. Like SMITH and ROBINSON he is hotly opposed to JONES (Flat), but he does not mind the other two so much. At an ordinary election the other two would be annoyed to see him, because, being more or less on their side, he must increase the danger of 'letting SMITH in on a split vote'. But under this arrangement (the S.T.V.) it is *impossible* to 'split the vote'; and no one can be elected by a minority of the votes polled.

Let us see.

At the counting of the votes the voting-papers are grouped first of all according to the first choices—SMITH (1), so many: JONES (1), so many. This is the result:

SMITH (Round).	.	.	.	7,000
JONES (Flat)	.	.	.	4,000
ROBINSON (Orange)	.	.	.	3,000
WATKINS (Oval)	.	.	.	999

The total number of votes 'polled' is 14,999. There are two seats to be won: and they will go to the first two candidates who score one-third *plus* 1 of the total votes—that is, 5,000.

Why is that, Richard? Because it is impossible for *three* candidates to get 5,000 votes out of 14,999 votes. So when two have got as far as that they must be top. Do you see? No. Well, it does not matter greatly. You can turn on the electric light without knowing how it works. The only people who *have* to understand all this are the Returning Officers, who manage the counting, and their staff. However, it will do you no harm to try.

This target figure—5,000—is called the ‘quota’.¹

Now you will see that dear old SMITH (Round) has ‘got his quota’, and he is at once elected. The odious JONES (Flat) is second: and for a moment it looks as if he might get the second seat. But wait a bit.

SMITH, with 7,000 votes, has 2,000 more than the ‘quota’, and these 2,000 votes are called his ‘surplus’. According to the rules of the game it is unfair, and foolish, that these 2,000 votes should be *ineffective*, wasted; and so large a body of opinion be represented only by SMITH. The SMITH cinema is full up, so to speak, and some of the overflow are allowed to go on to another cinema under the same management.

Only ‘some’. They can’t *all* get a free pass to the next place. SMITH’s chaps are not so important as all that.

In other words, they now add up all the *second* preferences on SMITH’s papers, and distribute *some* of them among the other candidates. If they distributed *all* of them it would mean that some of SMITH’s supporters were getting two votes, it seems: and each man’s vote must be effective only once.

Now, how do they decide *how many* to transfer to the others? You need not listen to this bit very hard, Richard, but I must go through with it, for I have to do the sums. SMITH’s surplus (2,000) is two-sevenths of his total vote (7,000): and they distribute his surplus in the same proportion—two-sevenths. Why, Richard? I never quite know. Anyhow, that is the drill.

Now, they find (and this is easy, because all the papers have been counted and arranged long before the Returning Officer begins his business)—they find that 4,000 of SMITH’s supporters gave a 2 to ROBINSON, and 2,000 gave a 2 to WATKINS. 1,000 did not give a 2 to any one—they ‘plumped’ for good old SMITH and no other. None gave a 2 to the detestable JONES.

Now give me my slide-rule, Richard. Two-sevenths of 4,000 I make 1,142, as near as matters: and two-sevenths of 2,000 I make 571. So let us distribute accordingly, and see what happens.

¹ ‘quota’—‘quot’—Latin: ‘how many’. Share or portion of a total.

SMITH	.	.	.	7,000—1,718=5,287
ROBINSON	.	.	.	3,000+1,142=4,142
JONES	.	.	.	4,000 =4,000
WATKINS	.	.	.	999+ 571=1,570

14,999

Look what has happened! The insufferable JONES (Flat) has gone down to third place. ROBINSON (Orange) has gone ahead of him: but he still has not got his 'quota' (5,000).

They now turn to the unfortunate WATKINS (Oval) who is still bottom and is deemed to be out of the running. It is unfair and foolish that all those who voted for him should be 'frustrated': and they are now free to have another bet and use their votes more sensibly.

So they look at all the 2's on the WATKINS papers, and transfer them accordingly. If the 2 is for SMITH (Round) they use the 3, for SMITH has his 'quota' and needs no more. A paper marked WATKINS 1, SMITH 2, ROBINSON 3, goes to ROBINSON.

And this time there is no calculation of fractions. *All* poor WATKINS' 2's are distributed, for so far no vote on his papers has counted at all yet, and every vote must be made effective as far as possible.

I think, by the way, Richard, that the 571 voters who couldn't get into the SMITH cinema, and went on to the WATKINS (only to find there's no show) have a chance to go on to the ROBINSON now. But don't press me on that point.

Anyhow, from the poor corpse of WATKINS (Oval), ROBINSON (Orange) gets 967 votes (some 2's, some 3's—but now they all become 1's), and even the wretched JONES gets 304 from his fellow freak.

So the score now stands thus:

SMITH (Round)	.	7,000—1,718	=5,287	Elected
ROBINSON (Orange)	.	3,000+1,142+967	=5,109	Elected
JONES (Flat)	.	4,000	+304=4,304	Out

ROBINSON (Orange) now has his 'quota', and gets the second seat. The people who were so foolish as to vote for WATKINS have had their second shot, helped to put ROBINSON in and keep the Flat Earth out.

The Flat Earth has had a fair chance: but he has not had an *unfair* chance, as he would have had if the thing had been settled on the first count. In that case anti-Flat votes would have been wasted and spent for nothing, at both ends—do you see?—at the top end, because SMITH had too many, and at the bottom because WATKINS had not enough. As it is, the real opinion of the electors has prevailed, and everybody's vote has had a fair *chance* to hit a target. Of course, if you *will* vote for Jones, nothing much can be done for you.

But some say—Wouldn't it be much simpler, and come to the same thing, if you gave the electors two votes (as there are two seats) and counted the votes in the ordinary way?

The answer is, I think, Richard: 'It might come to the same thing sometimes—but not by any means always. And that way you have no defence against the "split vote" and the "minority Member".'

Look at these figures (the 1945 Election):

Mr. A (Labour)	.	.	31,704	Elected
Mr. B (Labour)	.	.	31,327	Elected
Mr. C (Conservative)	.	.	26,911	
Mr. D (Lib. National)	.	.	24,199	
Mr. E (Liberal)	.	.	10,365	
Mr. F (Liberal)	.	.	8,264	

Labour maj. over C.	.	.	4,791
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Labour maj. over L. Nat.	.	.	7,505
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I mention no names or places: for the gentlemen elected for these constituencies are good and worthy Members, and it is no fault of theirs that they were elected in this queer way.

The only question is: Is it a good way of discovering the people's mind? And, I repeat, there are more than 160 'minority Members'.

When you tell your daddy about all this, he will sniff and

say contemptuously, 'Oh, yes! P.R.' By which initials he means 'Proportional Representation'.

But you, Richard, will bear witness that I have not once used those two long words. Personally, I never use them, if I can help it—partly because they mean, or are thought to mean, so many different things; partly because, unjustly, I think, Proportional Representation has 'got a bad name' among many people. And, for my purpose, it was not necessary. The two devices we have discussed—the Alternative Vote and the Single Transferable Vote—can be commended, or defended, on the very simple grounds I have mentioned, that they make the results more fair, the vote more effective, and the voter more contented.

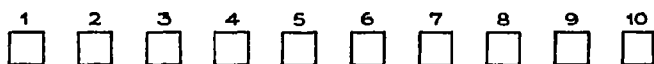
But I ought to tell you that both of them are included sometimes among the numerous schemes and proposals which are described, vaguely, as 'Proportional Representation'. These words would carry us much farther along the road of electoral reform, farther than I would go myself, and certainly much farther than I expect to carry you, Richard, to-day.

But, briefly, if I am right, the principal notion of 'P.R.' is this—that the present system of voting gives too little representation to minorities—who, after all, are citizens like the rest, and deserve to have *some* say in affairs. Here is one area (or electoral division) where for twenty years there has been an enormous majority for the Flat Earthers: and over there is another. In these areas ('they' say) the Round Earther has no hope whatever: he may live there all his life without ever sending to Parliament a man of his choice. But not far off are other Divisions, where it is the other way round—the Round Earther always elected, and the Flat Earther nowhere. How can you expect the Flat Earther there to be a good citizen and take an interest in Parliamentary affairs?

Look at it in another way. which may excite you more. In Liverpool, say, there are ten cinemas, each holding 1,000 people. Suppose that in Liverpool there are 10,000 Conservatives, 3,500 Socialists, and 1,500 Liberals. If mere numbers

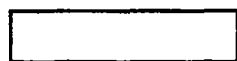
were to decide who gets in—or if the thing were settled by force—the 10,000 Conservatives would fill all the cinemas, and the Socialists and Liberals would get no seats at all. But no one would think of settling it in that kind of way. The Socialists and Liberals are citizens too, and have a right to go to the cinemas, though they will not expect to occupy so many seats. But that (say the P.R. people) is just how we do settle the *Parliamentary* seats. For twenty-five years all the ten seats are filled by the 10,000 Conservatives—and the 5,000 Socialists and Liberals are not represented at all. Then one day the ‘pendulum swings’ and, lo and behold, there are 10,000 Socialists. They take all the seats and the Conservatives have no say (the poor Liberals, of course, never have a say). But the minorities, whatever they are, are citizens also, and ought to have *some* say—a fair say—a ‘proportionate’ say.

Now go back to the cinemas, which hold 1,000 each:



There is room for 10,000 chaps only: but there are 15,000 chaps. Therefore only 10 in every 15 chaps—or 2 in every 3, do you follow, Richard? $\frac{10}{15} = \frac{2}{3}$ —can get a seat.

The parties are like this:



Conservative
10,000



Socialist
3,500



Liberal
1,500

Two-thirds of 10,000 is 6,666. 6,000 will fill 6 cinemas: so we give the Conservatives cinemas 1 to 6: and they have 666 chaps over.



Two-thirds of 3,500 Socialists is 2,333. So the Socialists fill 2 cinemas; and there are 333 chaps left over.

$$\begin{array}{c} 7 \quad 8 \\ \boxed{\text{diagonal lines}} \quad \boxed{\text{diagonal lines}} + 333 \\ \text{Socialist} \end{array}$$

Two-thirds of 1,500 Liberals is 1,000. So we put 1,000 Liberals into cinema 9.

$$\begin{array}{c} 9 \\ \boxed{\text{horizontal lines}} \end{array}$$

This leaves 666 Conservatives and 333 Socialists, who will go nicely into cinema 10—leaving 1 seat over for the Press.

$$\begin{array}{c} 10 \\ \boxed{\text{diagonal lines}} \end{array}$$

Now, that, Richard, roughly (the P.R. people say) is what ought to be done with the Parliamentary seats. It could be done very simply by means of the Single Transferable Vote as already described. There are 15,000 voters: divide that by 11 (1 more than the number of seats)—answer 1,363. Add 1=1,364: and that is the 'quota'. There would still be 10 seats: but the whole of Liverpool would be treated as one constituency. Instead of the Conservatives being allowed to surge in and bag all the seats at once, any one who could get 1,364 votes would secure a seat—or cinema. The little Liberals could do that once, no more. The Socialists could do it twice—the Conservatives seven times. Do a little multiplying on your own and you will see what I mean. So far, you will agree, it sounds fairly sensible.

But now I want to tell you what the *other* people say, the enemies of P.R. They say: 'But we don't *like* Liverpool to be treated as a single whole: we don't *like* the notion of a large constituency with ten Members. We like a smaller constituency with one, or perhaps two, Members. Then you preserve the personal contact. Who is going to open the Flower Show at Wavertree?'

By 'personal contact', Richard, they mean this, that at present each place has its own Member, and if it is not too large he can make himself known all through it and make a special study of the people and their problems. They, on the other hand, feel that he is *their* man and cares specially about *them*. If you had ten Members for Liverpool who (they say) would care specially about Wavertree or Everton? Who would open the Flower Show—and subscribe to the cricket club?

That is what they say, Richard, and there is something in it, though I think they sometimes give the point more weight than it is worth. It would be possible, I should have thought, for the candidates and Members to arrange to give special attention to particular districts, as before. Wavertree, it is true, would not be able to talk about '*Our*' Member any more. But the thing works well enough where there are two Members (both of them are '*Our*' Member), and if the constituencies were not too large, with not more than three or four Members, say, I believe it would be good.

But the 'enemies' say more than that. They say, 'Oh, we don't want that sort of thing. Look at the Continent! You'll get lots and lots of Little Parties, and weak unstable Governments'.

Now, this is a very unfair argument, and generally comes from some one who does not know *much* what he is talking about. For one thing, no one wants to have in this country some of the queer arrangements they have on the Continent—the Second Ballot, for example, or the 'List System'. They are so bad that I shall not even attempt to explain them: but they are all called 'P.R.', and help to give the poor dog a bad name.

Secondly, it is not the voting arrangements only that produce 'unstable Governments' on the Continent. (One might say that all foreigners are pretty unstable anyhow: but that would not be polite.) One reason why there were so many governments in France was that their Parliament sat for a fixed period and did not change with the Government, so that the Deputies could throw out a Government but stay

in themselves. Here, if the Members carry a vote of censure on the Government, they know that the chances are there will be a General Election, so they tend to act with more restraint.

As for 'a multiplicity' of small parties, that again is rather a Continental habit, and I should not be frightened about it here. No doubt an occasional Prohibitionist or Flat Earth candidate would get in: but that happens now, and does no great harm. New parties would only grow to the extent that they were supported. What is more likely, I think, is that it would be easier for Independents to get in: and such strong bodies of opinion as the Liberals would get fairer representation. It is very ridiculous, is it not, Richard, that though 2,000,000 voted Liberal they have only 12 Members in the House of Commons (and, of course, we do not know how many Liberals there are in the places where there was no Liberal to vote for). And look at these figures, Richard:

			<i>Votes</i>	<i>Members</i>
Socialists	.	.	11,992,000	393
Conservatives	.	.	8,665,566	189
Liberals	.	.	2,239,668	12

It took 30,000 votes, you see, to get a Socialist in, 45,000 to elect a Conservative, and 186,000 a Liberal!

'Yes', say the enemies, 'that is all very well, but the House of Commons is not intended to be an *exact* mirror of the people's mind. It is meant to express the general will of the people, and, above all, to provide a *strong Government*. If the present Parliament had been elected according to your old 'proportional' doings, the Government would have had a majority of about 50 only; and if the Liberals had turned against them, perhaps no majority at all. You would have had a Government uncertain of itself, afraid to go forward, and likely to fall at any time.'

Well, Richard, I do not know about that. It is very easy to exaggerate the benefits of a 'strong' Government with an unbeatable majority. Conservative Governments before the

war were much too 'strong': and if they had had fewer chaps many things might have been better. I think the present Government (with its majority of 200) is much too strong; and on some things it does not even represent a majority of the voters. For instance, on the question of the Government continuing its 'special powers' for five years or two, when the Liberals voted with the Conservatives (for two), there were 12,167,076 voters represented in the Government Lobby, and 12,804,892 in the Opposition. Yet the Government, of course, prevailed, and they have their powers for five years. No, Richard, I think if the Liberals had had their fair number of Members they would have let the Socialists do a great many things, and a great deal of good. But when they became obstreperous the Liberals, and Parliament, could have said, 'Oy! Stop it!' Now they can only say 'Oy'.

Well, there you are, Richard. I have tried to tell you, as fairly as I can, the arguments for and against electoral reform. I hope you will put the points to your daddy this evening.

XVIII

WELL, CHILDREN, this is really the end. You have been so good, on the whole, that I think you may have a natural aptitude for public affairs; and one day, perhaps, you will both be Members of Parliament. Let us imagine it, for fun.

I am specially glad that you are going to Westminster, Ivy; for I admire the women Members and think there should be more of them. They work very hard; they fight their causes with courage: they speak, very often, more clearly than the men, and, what is remarkable, they waste fewer words. Of course, we men are rather naughty sometimes, and laugh in the wrong place. There is the famous story of the lady Member who was discussing the statistics of maternal mortality before and after child-birth: 'Mr. Speaker,' she said indignantly, 'we have ante-natal treatment, and we have post-natal treatment: and still we have these appalling figures!'

Well, you have been elected, and you approach the great building with pride and wonder and awe. At least, I hope you do. In St. Stephen's Hall, which stands on the site of St. Stephen's Chapel, where the House of Commons used to sit, you will stop perhaps and look at the great statues of the giants of the past. There on the left is the mighty Fox, with one hand raised, denouncing some one or other. Probably he is denouncing tall Mr. Pitt, Prime Minister at twenty-three, who is opposite him. There in that very place those two great men debated and thundered: and you new Members do well to look at them with awe. Yet they were only Members of the House of Commons like you. Think of that, and march on bravely to the Chamber. Mr. Pitt was the Mr. Churchill of his time, and spoke for England against the Continental tyrant. Who knows—you may be the Mr. Pitt of your generation, and have a statue in St. Stephen's Hall. March on.

Presently, maybe, you will meet a very old Member, walking rather slowly along the corridor. He will be very

kind to you, and tell you all he can. As many have said, it is very like the first day at a new school: but the old boys do all they can to help. As the old boy shows you round, and tells you stories about the place, you young things may begin to wonder how old he is, and whether he is not too old to be a Member. When you ask about him, they will tell you that Old X has been a Member for many, many years. He has given all his life to the place. At first, he showed great promise. Some said he would be Prime Minister one day. Perhaps, as he marched past Mr. Pitt the first time, he said it himself. He did once get as far as Under-Secretary, and did not do badly. But then his Government was defeated, and next time he was passed over. He was never really meant to be Prime Minister: and now it is quite certain that he never will be. Now there are very few who remember the good things he did when he was young: and when he gets up in the Chamber a good many Members go out. It sounds a sad story. But it is not so sad as the story of Old Y and Old Z. They, too, gave their lives to this place. It was their life. But at the last election they were not elected, and now they are quite forgotten, except by some of the servants and policemen. The corridors are full of ghosts, I believe, children, the ghosts of the old Members, muttering again the speeches they made, and the speeches they never made, which worry them more: wondering why they ever gave so much of their life to this place, in which, looking back, they seem to have done so little good—yet longing to be back in it, chattering in the Smoking Room, crowding through the Lobbies, cheering in the Chamber.

But Old X is not so sad: for he is still part of the place. He does not grieve because he was never Prime Minister: he is humbly glad to have played a small part in the great parade of Parliament: he has still his own corner in the heart of Britain: he is still a member of a mighty team. And when he walks past Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, he is not so sad, he is not frightened: he is proud. March on, children—march on.

APPENDIX ONE

Here is a page from the 'Order Paper', which is the programme of the day's work.

No. 15

307

Friday 12th October 1945

ORDERS OF THE DAY

- * 1. Coatbridge and Springburn Elections (Validation) Bill;—Second Reading.
- * 2. Indian Franchise Bill [*Lords*];—Second Reading.

Mr. Secretary Ede,—House of Commons (Parliamentary Constituencies),—That the Draft of an Order entitled the House of Commons (Boundary Commissions) (Appointed Day) Order, 1945, a copy of which was presented on 9th October, be approved.

- * 3. Indian Divorce Bill;—Second Reading.
- * 4. British Settlements Bill;—Second Reading.
- * 5. National Insurance (Industrial Injuries) [*Money*];—Report thereupon.
- * 6. Supply;—Committee.
- * 7. Ways and Means;—Committee.

Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer,—Import Duties (Additional) (Various Goods),—That the Additional Import Duties (No. 4) Order, 1945 (S.R. & O., 1945, No. 853), dated 23rd July 1945, made by the Treasury under the Import Duties Act, 1932, a copy of which Order was presented on 15th August, be approved.

ORDERS OF THE DAY, *continued*

- * 8. Inshore Fishing Industry Bill;—Second Reading.
- * 9. Agriculture (Artificial Insemination) Bill;—Second Reading.

Mr. Glenvil Hall,—To move the following Resolution in Committee of the whole House under Standing Order No. 69 [*King's Recommendation to be signified*]:—

Inshore Fishing Industry [Money],—That for the purposes of any Act of the present Session to authorise the provision of financial assistance to inshore fishermen and persons desiring to engage in the inshore fishing industry it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of moneys provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Secretary of State concerned with the fishing industry in Scotland for making loans and grants to such persons as aforesaid towards the acquisition, improvement or reconditioning of boats and equipment, subject to the following limitations, that is to say:—

- (a) that the amount of any grant so made in respect of the acquisition, improvement or reconditioning of any boat or equipment shall not exceed one-third of the price, or one-third of the cost of the improvement or reconditioning, as the case may be;
- (b) that the aggregate amount of the grants and loans so made shall not exceed five hundred thousand pounds and eight hundred thousand pounds respectively; and
- (c) that no grant or loan shall be so made after the expiration of a period not exceeding seven years beginning with the date of the passing of the said Act;

(2) the payment into the Exchequer of any sums received by the said Minister and the Secretary of State by way of interest on or repayment of the principal of any such loans.

ORDERS OF THE DAY, *continued*

Mr. Glenvil Hall,—To move the following Resolution in Committee of the whole House under Standing Order No. 69 [*King's Recommendation to be signified*]:—

Agriculture (Artificial Insemination) [Money],—That for the purposes of any Act of the present Session to enable the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Secretary of State to make contributions and establish centres for the purposes of research as to the practice of artificial insemination of livestock, to provide for the payment of grants out of moneys provided by Parliament in respect of initial losses incurred in the operation of certain centres for the artificial insemination of cattle, and for purposes connected therewith, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of moneys provided by Parliament—

(1) of any expenses incurred in accordance with the provisions of the said Act by the said Minister and the Secretary of State, respectively—

- (a) in contributing towards approved expenditure incurred in the conduct of research or experiment in matters affecting the practice of artificial insemination of livestock, including poultry and bees;
- (b) in establishing and operating, for the purpose of such research and experiment, centres providing services of artificial insemination for any such livestock.

to such amount as may be sanctioned by the Treasury;

(2) of any sums required for the payment in accordance with the provisions of the said Act of grants in respect of losses incurred, during a period beginning on or after 1st January 1945, and ending not later than 31st March 1951, in the operation of centres providing services of artificial insemination for cattle in Great Britain, being centres owned and controlled by Milk Marketing Boards or other organisations carrying on business for the mutual benefit of breeders or owners of cattle;

ORDERS OF THE DAY, *continued*

and the payment into the Exchequer of any sums received by the said Minister or the Secretary of State which are required by the said Act to be so paid.

- *a10. Supplies and Services (Transitional Powers) Bill;—
Committee.
- * 11. Supplies and Services (Transitional Powers) [Money];—
Report thereupon.

Mr. Glenvil Hall,—To move the following Resolution in Committee of the Whole House under Standing Order No. 69 [*King's Recommendation to be signified*]:—

Water (Scotland) [Money],—That for the purposes of any Act of the present Session to make provision for the conservation of water resources and for water supplies in Scotland and for purposes connected therewith, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of moneys provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in the exercise of his functions under the said Act.

*Those marked thus * are Government Orders of the Day*

NOTICES OF MOTIONS RELATING TO ORDERS OF THE DAY

(9)

In Committee on Supplies and Services (Transitional Powers) Bill:—

Mr. Secretary Ede,—

- * Clause 1, page 1, line 9, leave out 'at fair prices.'
- * Clause 1, page 1, line 11, after 'distribution,' insert 'or their availability at fair prices.'
- * Clause 1, page 1, line 11, at end, insert,—
(b) to facilitate the demobilisation and resettlement of persons and to secure the orderly disposal of surplus material; or.'

Here are some 'Questions for Oral Answer'. The Member does not read out his Question; that would take too much time. The Speaker calls 'Mr. Palmer'. Mr. Palmer says: 'Number 31, Sir'. The Minister then reads his answer, and the other Members, who have 'Order Papers' in their hands, can follow what is going on.

- * 31. Mr. Palmer,—To ask the Minister of Labour, if he is aware of the difficulties which are being caused in the engineering industry by the call up for the forces of skilled tool-makers; and whether, in view of the importance of retooling for peace production and the export trade, he will reconsider the present policy.
- * 32. Mr. Jennings,—To ask the Minister of Labour, if he is satisfied that sufficient numbers of men and women are being released from the services for employment in the trades and industries vital to our export markets.
- * 33. Mr. Jennings,—To ask the Minister of Labour, whether he is satisfied that young men called up out of industry are being replaced by the release of men from the services.
- * 34. Mr. Daggan,—To ask the Minister of Labour, whether it is the practice for the employment exchange to fill vacancies for employment in new or old industries in areas over which it has control from the persons unemployed in that area, and afterwards to draw from pools of unemployment existing in other areas; and what opportunities, when no more labour is required, will there be for obtaining employment in the case of those persons still unemployed in areas where no new industries will or can be established.

QUESTIONS, *continued*

- * 35. Sir Waldron Smithers,—To ask the Minister of Labour, if he will state the number of man hours lost from January 1945 to the latest available date in unofficial stoppages on British railways, docks, trams and omnibus services; and what action does he propose to take to put an end to this type of action.
- * 36. Mr. Bossom,—To ask the Minister of Labour, whether he is aware that there are large numbers of men and women in His Majesty's forces stationed in this country pending the date of their demobilisation; and whether the Government has any proposals whereby this personnel can be employed for the benefit of the nation.
- * 37. Mr. Medland,—To ask the Minister of Labour, if it is proposed to incorporate the Labour Supply Inspectorate into the permanent structure of his Ministry; to what extent the discharge of these technical officers is left in the hands of regional controllers without consultation with the representatives of these men; and if he is aware that 46 inspectors have already taken appointments in industry owing to the uncertainty of their position.
- * 38. Sir Robert Young,—To ask the Minister of Labour, whether the men to be released from each of the three services will be the same percentage of the total strength of those in the Navy, Army and Air Force, or on what basis the allocations were made; and will he make it clear to R.A.F. personnel why the group releases of the Navy and Army are higher in group numbers than that of the R.A.F.
- * 39. Mr. John McKay,—To ask the Minister of Labour, if he is aware of the difficulties at present, which prevent the personnel of the R.A.F. from getting their releases according to their groups at the same time or speed as the other services; and if he will at once consult with his colleagues in order to give to all men in the forces who are being prevented from release at the time that age and service applies in general, some recompense financially or otherwise, because of the hardship they are suffering.
- * 40. Mr. Callaghan,—To ask the Minister of Labour, whether he will permit Merchant Navy service rendered prior to Army service, to count in defining a man's age and service group number.

QUESTIONS, *continued*

- * 41. Mr. Henderson Stewart,—To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what were the terms of the letters circulated in September by the Department of Agriculture for Scotland on the subject of continued service by members of the W.L.A.; and whether the further statement regarding release, mentioned therein, has yet been issued.
- * 42. Mr. Henderson Stewart,—To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what Ministries, in addition to the Scottish Office, are participating in the building of houses in Scotland; what function each Ministry performs; and what over-all responsibility he exercises.
- * 43. Mr. Gallacher,—To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will appoint a Commission to inquire into land ownership in Scotland and, where there is no clear title, to make recommendations on the use to which such land should be put.
- * 44. Mr. Gallacher,—To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will introduce legislation at an early date, providing for statutory monthly meetings of Scottish Members in Edinburgh to discuss with representatives of the Convention of Royal Burghs and the Association of County Councils urgent matters affecting the welfare of Scotland.
- * 45. Mr. De la Bère,—To ask the Prime Minister, whether, in view of the possibility that there are still in various parts of the country some land mines which have been overlooked, he will instruct the service departments to issue a questionnaire to serving and non-serving personnel asking them to notify any special knowledge they may have regarding the location of these undetected mines, in view of the danger to children and the general public.
- * 46. Sir Waldron Smithers,—To ask the Prime Minister, if he will state the latest position in the negotiations caused by the ending of Lend-Lease by the U.S.A.
- * 47. Mr. George Wallace,—To ask the Prime Minister, if His Majesty's Government are prepared to consider the issue to local authorities, as a general practice, of a clearly phrased precis of every Act or Order for which local authorities receive delegated responsibility.

QUESTIONS, *continued*

- * 48. Mr. Callaghan,—To ask the Prime Minister, if he is considering the reform of the central machinery of government to provide for a concentration of responsibility and a rearrangement of functions.
- * 49. Major Beamish,—To ask the Prime Minister, whether a decision has yet been reached regarding the anomalies that have arisen over the terms of qualification for the various campaign stars and medals; whether it is the intention to issue a victory medal; and whether he will make a full statement on the subject.
- * 50. Captain Marsden,—To ask the Prime Minister, if a sufficient period of leave will be given to all officers and men of the R.N., Army and R.A.F. released from Japanese prisoner-of-war camps to enable them to spend the Christmas holidays in their own homes.
- * 51. Mr. Peter Freeman,—To ask the Prime Minister, whether he can state the total casualties caused to Allies and enemies in the World War 1939-45: and corresponding figures for the European War of 1914-18.
- * 52. Mr. Stokes,—To ask the Prime Minister, when the dispatches relating to the fall of Singapore and the first campaign in Greece will be published.
- * 53. Squadron-Leader Donner,—To ask the Prime Minister, whether, in view of the increasing number of unofficial strikes, it is still the policy of His Majesty's Government to repeal the Trades Disputes Act.
- * 54. Sir Waldron Smithers,—To ask the Lord President of the Council, if he will set up an inquiry, under the chairmanship of a British judge, at which evidence can be taken on oath to inquire into and report to this House on the reasons for the criticisms and complaints of the working of E.N.S.A.
- * 55. Sir Ralph Glyn,—To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much value in dollars under the reverse Lease-lend total of 5,600,000,000, came from the British Commonwealth and Empire; how much from the United Kingdom, and how much from all the rest of the Allies jointly.
- * 56. Sir Ralph Glyn,—To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, what was the value in pounds sterling of the investment of British funds in the U.S.A. in 1939, 1940 and 1941, to

QUESTIONS, *continued*

build, equip and operate factories for production of aircraft, A.F.Vs., ships and other forms of war munitions, subsequently taken over by the U.S. supply departments after the entry of the U.S.A. into the war; and at what valuation were they taken over.

- * 57. Sir Ralph Glyn,—To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, to what extent any common standard of costings has been agreed between the Treasury and the United States when determining the value for lease-lend services, in view of the fact that United States procurement agencies have been purchasing in the United Kingdom and Dominions, goods at prices considerably below the cost of similar articles in America.
- * 58. Mr. Bartlett,—To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he will now arrange that old age pensions should not be subjected to income tax.

To 'put down' a Question, Richard, you hand it to one of the Clerks at the Table (in the Chamber), who will make sure that it is in order, and addressed to the right Minister, and, if in any doubt, will refer it to the Speaker. 'A question must not contain any argument, inference, imputation, epithet, or ironical expression. . . . It must not ask for an expression of opinion, for the solution of an abstract legal question, or of a hypothetical proposition.' And, 'If a question contains a statement, the Member asking it must make himself responsible for the accuracy of the statement.' (*Manual of Procedure.*) So, you see, it is not so easy.

Here is a very short 'Bill', the first stage in the life of a Statute or Act of Parliament. Most Bills are much longer: and some have hundreds of clauses. This Bill never became an Act.

Licensing Exemption (Houses of Parliament).

B I L L

To exempt the Sale of Intoxicating
Liquor in the Houses of Parliament
from the Licensing Acts.

*(Prepared and brought in by
Lord Stanley, Mr. Kearley, Mr. Power, and
Mr. W. Redmond.)¹*

*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
17 February 1897.*

PRINTED BY EYRE AND SPOTTISWOODE,
PRINTERS TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

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[Price $\frac{1}{2}$ d.]

[Bill 139.]

¹ These are the 'backers'.

[69 VICT.] *Licensing Exemption (Houses of Parliament).*

1

A
B I L L

TO

Exempt the Sale of Intoxicating Liquor in the Houses of A.D. 1897.
Parliament from the Licensing Acts.¹

BE it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

- 5 1. Nothing in the Licensing Acts, 1872 and 1874, or in any enactment relating to the revenue of excise, shall affect or apply to the sale of intoxicating liquor in the Palace of Westminster for consumption therein where the sale is by any person acting under the authority of a committee of either House of Parliament.
- 10 2. This Act may be cited as the Licensing (Houses of Parliament) Act, 1897.

Exemption
from 35 & 36
Vict. c. 94.
and 37 & 38
Vict. c. 49.
of sale of
liquor in
Houses of
Parliament.
Short title.

APPENDIX TWO

LETTER TO THE ELECTORS OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY

FROM A. P. HERBERT,
NEW COLLEGE 1910-1914, LATE SENIOR BURGESS
INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE

General Election - July, 1945

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

For ten years I have had the honour to represent you in the great Victory Parliament. If it is your wish, I am willing to serve again.

I stand again as an Independent, supporting our great Prime Minister and his programme in the main, but by no means bound to support him in every particular. I claim to have been a true Independent in the last Parliament, voting according to my judgment on either side, but not conceiving it to be an Independent's duty to be always 'agin the Government'. I have made many friends among the Liberal and Labour Parties and have been grateful for their support, and proud to work with them, on many occasions. But in the big divisions I have generally been in the Government lobby. I supported Mr. Churchill by vote on every vote of confidence, and by speech in the dark days of Singapore. I said on May 20th, 1942—and say again—'I believe the people know that they have a great man. They are determined to keep him, and determined to deserve him—and so am I.'

I believe that the Party System is necessary and good, and I honour those who accept its discipline; but I still believe that Independence, here and there, can be practical, honest, and useful, especially in a University Member.

I hear that complaints have been made at Oxford that during the war I have not visited Oxford much. That is quite true, and is not at all surprising. My attendance at the House—and my correspondence—were also less regular than before: but, when I give the reason, I hope I shall be forgiven. Rightly or wrongly, I joined the River Emergency Service in 1938, was called up on September 3rd, 1939, was invited by the Admiralty to transfer

to the Royal Navy in June, 1940, and have served as a Petty Officer in the Thames Patrol Service since then. I have steamed 20,000 miles in that service, and from first to last have played a modest part in the great story of London River at war. I do not think the time was wasted, though my duties kept me away from the House—and Oxford—for long periods. On the average I slept at home two nights a month, and many letters, I know, were neglected. At least, living and sleeping in a small cabin with 'ordinary' seamen and stokers, working with lightermen, watermen and dockers up and down the River, I was continually learning, at first hand, about their lives. I have made four visits to the Continent since D-Day. I have also made many sea-passages in small vessels of the Navy and have studied admiringly the fine work of our 'hostilities only' sailors, officers and men. What I learned I humbly hope that I may be able to use to advantage.

In 1943, at the request of His Majesty's Government, I visited Newfoundland and Labrador, as one of the Parliamentary Mission. With my colleagues, Lord Ammon and Sir Derrick Gunston, I travelled 7,000 miles. I wrote a personal report of 30,000 words which has not been published. But some of my main proposals, I believe, have found favour with His Majesty's Government.

(2) ABROAD—A STRONG BRITAIN—I am writing this rambling letter to you at Field-Marshal Montgomery's Headquarters on the Luneburg Heath, where the vast surrender of the German Armed Forces was made. It is perhaps a good viewpoint for a Parliamentary candidate peering into the future. All about me the British troops, by no means too numerous, are patiently and cheerfully at their ancient work of kindness and control—of civilization. Here one perceives not merely the magnitude of our achievement but the magnitude of our task. Things may be much worse here before they are better; and our frontier is now, not the Rhine, but the Elbe. All these soldiers long to go home, and they deserve it; and we must do all we can to get them good jobs and decent homes. But other soldiers, other airmen, other sailors, will have a German address for many years to come. Japan will give trouble—who knows how long? There may be trouble anywhere in the Empire. And, whatever the conclusions of San Francisco may amount to, our little island is one of the Great Powers which 'talks big', and will be expected

to 'act big', and will not be respected unless she can. So that here, on Luneburg Heath, it seems much too soon to think of dispersing the strength of Britain, so slowly got together. Britain must remain strong, in a strong united Commonwealth and Empire, hand in hand with all the English-speakers, and with any friends she can find elsewhere.

We are too small, evidently, to 'act big' alone for long, in spite of all our proud and just boasts about 1940. But what is to be our contribution to the forces of right and reason?

- (i) We are too small—here I agree with some of my Labour friends—to afford a large Navy, a large Air Force, and a large Army, if at the same time we are to rebuild our industries, regain our export trade, and feed our people. Still, we must have a strong Navy and Air Force—both of which, by the way, apart from fighting, yield an educational dividend at home and a commercial dividend abroad ('Showing the Flag' is not mere 'flag-waving'). We can keep a small professional army, better-paid, for duty abroad, and the cadres, the frame-work, for something much bigger.

The whole must be fed, I am sure, by some system of compulsory National Service. Every fit young man should serve, say, 18 months (with a limited choice as to age) in one of the Armed Forces. For six months he will be trained; for twelve months he will be useful. This question will not arise immediately, for the present Act, no doubt, will continue till the end of Japan. But it should be settled soon; for the world must know that we do not intend to be caught short again, and our commanders and planners must know what to expect. Having myself enlisted in two wars, I can perhaps speak with propriety of the benefit to mind and body that training in the forces bestows. Nor am I at all afraid of recommending this proposal to Oxford University which it will affect so much. Many people insist upon recalling the 'King and Country' debate at the Oxford Union in the crazy, lazy, '20's. Much more significant to me was the Union Debate (which I attended) in April, 1939, when the young men of Oxford, without any lead from Parliament, debated and carried, by a majority, the motion 'That this House is in favour of conscription'.

- (ii) It would be helpful, too, to the strength of the English-speakers, if there could be a concerted programme of Force throughout the Empire—if it could be understood, for

example, that in any just and common cause one division could be counted one from South Africa, two from Canada, and so on. It was queer that, at the outbreak of this war, a country so prosperous, and with such a sea board, as Canada, should find herself without a Navy—great though the credit that is due to her magnificent improvisation. We should never have disbanded the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in Newfoundland, and I strongly support my colleague Sir Derrick Gunston's proposal for the maintenance of a Newfoundland Battalion. In these affairs this hard-worked old mother should have more regular help from her daughters.

- (iii) Men of all three Services here describe with awe and wonder the new German devices and developments they have discovered in every department. The enemy, they relate, were far ahead of us at many points, and, if the war had continued much longer, could have tried us severely. We must never allow our technical development to starve or slacken.

I shall be told 'You talk as if you expected another war. With whom?' But I am not expected to name the burglar when I ask for an insurance policy. I do not 'expect' another war; but I am sure that we are less likely to have trouble if we assume that there may be trouble than if we assume that all is well and slide back into the fatal '20's. In the difficult years ahead, there will be occasions when we have to thump the table: and we must not again find ourselves thumping the table without a fist.

Having determined what our own scale of strength is to be we should seek an understanding with the countries of Western Europe. Like Russia, we are entitled to 'have safe frontiers' and reliable neighbours.

I agree with the oft-repeated assertion that we must remain friends with Russia. But a little less suspicion, a little more accommodation, on the other side would help this great aim. I suggest that we should be a little less reluctant to speak our minds to all our great Allies. One can thump the table without fighting. We believe in free speech, we have fought for free speech, because it is the most practical way to conduct our affairs peaceably; and within reasonable limits we should be ready to practise it on the international plane. Half the unjust suspicions from which we suffer, I believe, are caused, and encouraged, by our own reticence. I gave my vote to the Government on the Yalta Agreement because I did not want Mr. Churchill to fall, and I knew that he

and Mr. Eden had done their best; but I agree with those who deplore the behaviour of Russia to the Poles and others. People say 'It is no use taking a high line about right and wrong unless you are willing to go to war'. I disagree. There is no nation so mighty to-day that it can afford to flout the public opinion of the world.¹ But of course, if everything that a nation does is discussed in reverent whispers, she is likely to continue in her former courses.

As for the **Germans**—if by a wave of the wand I could wipe out that ever-tiresome race, I should be tempted to do it, for I am reluctantly persuaded that there is some fatal and indestructible bug in them that turns most of them into sheep or savages—either, as the Prime Minister said, 'at your throat or at your feet'. That, I recognize, is not a practical policy. We must help them to build something out of the wreck, as we are doing already: but the German record should always be at the background of our minds. I have seen in the past few days how difficult it is for our friendly smiling soldiers to keep up 'non-fraternization', not to wave to the ladies or play with the children. Sooner or later the order, I suppose, will be withdrawn: but it was right, it was valuable, it has done good. For the first time, in the faces of our soldiers, the Germans have seen what the world thinks of them. They have seen their own guilt. And it is their guilt.

The last two wars were not caused by 'economic maladjustment' or 'capitalist exploitation', but by the Germans. It should not be necessary to assert this simple belief, but it is. There are too many among us who do not accept it. I fear not only those who are far too ready to forgive those who trespass against others, but those for whom nationality means nothing, who maintain that the 'worker' in the Wehrmacht is the twin brother of the 'worker' in the British Army. If such counsels prevail there will certainly be another German war, for they will end in the restoration of Germany precisely to her former place and power. I will not weary you with my opinions on 'What to do with Germany', but at least I am not for that.

(8) AT HOME

- (a) I reject the suggestion that the Prime Minister, though a great war-leader, will somehow dwindle into a feeble and insignificant figure before the problems of peace. It should not be necessary to defend the author of the Shop Hours Act,

¹ Since these words were written there have been two or three good examples.

the lieutenant of the late Lord Lloyd George, in the days of his great reforms, and the man who has imagined and interpreted the minds of the people with such affection and accuracy, from such a charge. Apart from that, the problems before us are still not purely peace-time problems, and a strong, respected leader is no less needed than he was a year ago.

- (b) But if I saw among the Socialists an evidently perfect leader for Britain, I should still fear to give them total power to-morrow. The Labour Ministers in the Coalition, high and low, have done fine work, and they have four or five men of outstanding merit; but, with great respect, I doubt very much if the full team is strong enough. Certainly, Mr. Churchill can rely on better batting all through, so to speak, and his second eleven is far superior.
- (c) If I were sure about the team I should still be doubtful of the doctrine. In my last address to you in 1935, I wrote, I see, as follows:—

‘THE MINES.—I believe that private enterprise is, on the whole, the best machinery for distributing wealth and getting things done; but I am not, like the Socialist, the slave of dogma. The mines may be a special case, as the miners are, without doubt, a specially deserving class of workers in a specially dangerous and important industry. If the mine owners are unable or unwilling so to conduct their industry that the miners can enjoy good wages, I am willing to vote for nationalization.’

I incline to that view still, though the experience of State Control in the mines during the war has not been encouraging. Nationalization may, as someone has said, be a measure of desperation, but coal does seem to be in a desperate state.

But when my Socialist friends tell me that the remedy for everything is to nationalize everything I cannot follow them. I do not think that in their humane and worthy hearts they really believe it themselves. But it is the One Big Idea, and they cannot escape from it. As I wrote to you in 1935: ‘The essential weakness of the Socialist Party is its rigidity, its passion for fixed mathematical formulae—as if human life were a game of chess . . . When the formula does not fit the facts, the leader would like to forget it: but it is too late. His well-trained followers brandish the formula before him, and scribble “Traitor” on his back.’

That, I take it, is the position to-day. And so, if you return

them to total power for the next few fateful years, when more than ever we shall need calm and confidence to get the ship of trade equipped and afloat again, we are to expect a series of home-made upheavals in the harbour and a row of pre-fabricated obstacles outside. Not only the 'key industries', but every industry, I gather, is to be nationalized in turn; a long wrangle in Parliament, an immense business of valuation and compensation, sterilizing uncertainty for any industry that may be next on the list. Mr. Attlee wrote long ago: 'The atmosphere will be comparable to that existing in this country at the beginning of the Great War.' Thank you very much. And at the end, what? The same workers doing the same jobs, not necessarily better or for better wages, or cheaper—probably not. We might have afforded such luxurious manœuvres in a period of assured prosperity and cosmic goodwill; but just now the thing is crazy. All this is justified by the entirely false antithesis between 'production for profit' and 'production for the community'. The notion that men like Lord Nuffield, Lord Woolton, Lord McGowan have thought of profit only and not the community in the building up of their great enterprises does not bear examination for a moment. As for the 'worker', it is indeed a wonder that, at the present time, when every citizen in every street has some complaint to make, fair or not, about the harshness, the meanness, the injustice, the inhumanity, the inefficiency of 'the State', anyone should think to gain popular favour by preparing to hand all workers over to the State from which they are happily preparing to escape.

I am ready to support the retention of any reasonable 'control' (food, houses, the use of land) for a reasonable period. I could be persuaded as a matter of practical expediency that any particular enterprise would be better done or dominated by the State. But I see no universal 'principle' here. If I did I should be compelled to bring under it the newspapers, and my own profession of writing. Logically, a State Press, produced for 'the community' and not for horrid private profit, must be as good and necessary as a State railway; but not even the Socialists would approve of that. Or perhaps they would. The argument, by the way, that the success of 'Mulberry' proves the case for nationalization should go into the school-books as a classic example of the *non sequitur*.

(d) I do not think recrimination about the *pre-war years* is profitable or seemly. I have small respect for those young patriots, 'reserved' or unfit (it is sad how many who wanted

to 'fight' in 1938 (or earlier) turned out to be C3 in 1939), whose chosen war work was to write remunerative works of abuse under false names against statesmen either dead or bound to silence by the party truce. The Tories can look after themselves, but I am concerned for fair play and the *decencies* of public life; and, since this stuff is flying about again, perhaps an Independent should say an impartial word.

The main charge is that the Tories caused the war and endangered the country by failing to re-arm in time, and failing to re-arm with effect. It is conveniently forgotten that in the East Fulham by-election in 1933 the Government now charged with sloth and cowardice were loudly abused as 'war-mongers' (I have the quotations at home) and the Labour Candidate rode to victory on a cry which practically was 'Butter before guns'. Further, almost to the end, the Socialist party voted against all the Service estimates. We know their answer. Their action was a constitutional protest against the foreign policy of the Government, against the 'betrayal of collective security', and so on. That makes no sense; for even 'collective' security could not be worked without arms. But the main point is that it was quite impossible to re-arm *with effect*, to get the hearty backing of the workers, to ask for 'dilution', or the relaxing of Trade Union rules so long as Labour in Parliament was denouncing the programme as capitalist war-mongering. And the defence breaks down completely when we come to the Spring of 1939. Then, when everyone knew that war was imminent, and arguments about 'collective security' were purely academic, the Government proposed the first instalment of conscription. Both Labour and Liberal parties hotly opposed it, and Mr. Attlee moved a vote of censure. We are now told that it was not till they condescended to enter the Government of 1940 that anything worth doing was done. If that were true it would be nothing much to boast about—they should have come in at the beginning: but it may be observed that the aircraft which won the Battle of Britain, the ships which held the seas, in 1940, were not designed or begun in that summer.

I always refused to support by my vote the accommodations with Mussolini. I voted for 'Munich', after great heart-burning, but the more I saw of the war, the more sure I was that the much-maligned Mr. Chamberlain was right. If some of the fiery yellow scribblers had been where I was in mid-1940, and with the same amount of ammunition, they might have agreed.

To-day Abyssinia is free, the Czechs are free, and Britain's name stands high. But these men still think it proper and patriotic to blacken her name again with shouts of 'Men of Munich', and miscellaneous mud from the past. There are some deplorable Britons who see an element of 'Munich' in Russia's action of August, 1939, and in the present plight of the Poles. But they do not rush about shouting those opinions. It may well be that everything Russia does is an act of immaculate statesmanship: but let us have fair play for our own people, even if they are 'politicians'.

If I had chosen to spend the war writing yellow books of abuse about the 'Prog, M.P.',¹ I could have made a good and lucrative job of it. I am glad I did not. Every party, the whole people, as Mr. Bevin frankly said, share the responsibility for the years before the war, and it profits nothing to dig them up again. After all, the aim of 'appeasement' was to preserve the peace by Christian dealing; and it is possible to be proud that we suffered so much provocation so long, and tried, in Christian fashion, not to believe the worst of others. But, pride or shame, we are all in it. Now we have got together, let us go on together.

(4) **PERSONAL ACTIVITIES**—Any Member of Parliament—especially, I think, a University Member—is entitled, and wise, in these complicated times, to select and limit his own areas of activity. We cannot all be experts on all the White Papers, all the mysteries of Dumbarton Oaks or Bretton Woods, or all the details of National Insurance. Among my special interests I shall hope to include the following:—

- (i) **THE SERVICES**—Thanks to the Germans, I have spent ten years of my life in uniform. As the only serving non-commissioned officer in the late House of Commons I feel that I have a special duty to 'other ranks' and ratings. When the scheme for post-war payments was announced I suggested, vainly, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that the 'gratuities' should not be based on rank, but length of service. I had an enormous number of letters from service-men supporting me, and still think it is right. I know the answer, that payment by rank rewards those who accepted the responsibilities of promotion. But they have already been rewarded by greater pay—and comfort. The other post-war payments

¹ 'Prog'—A prig who goes about announcing that he alone is 'progressively-minded'.

are irrespective of rank. Back in 'civvies' we should be equal again. Back in 'civvies' myself, I shall have something to say about certain Admiralty matters.

- (ii) In 1942 I initiated a debate on the *Mercantile Marine* for whom we are all so anxious to secure a 'square deal', regular employment and good conditions. I was assured that everything could be safely left to the National Maritime Board and the Seamen's Union, who seemed to resent our well-meant discussion. The seamen who wrote to me were more encouraging. We shall see.
- (iii) I shall continue to press for the restoration of '*Private Members' Time*', which I consider valuable, not merely for the production of laws but the training of Members; and, so far as the luck of the ballot allows, I shall make use of it myself, as before.
- (iv) There is much to be done in the field of LAW REFORM. I believe that the Lord Chancellor has some reforms in preparation. Failing Government action, I should myself tackle first the *cost of law*—especially to the poor. The present financial limits for Poor Persons are tragically wrong and must be raised. I do not, on the other hand, see why the lawyers who do Poor Persons work should do it for nothing. As I have said in the House, I would abolish all court fees. The Royal Courts of Justice should not be a revenue-producing department; and Magna Carta declares 'To no man will we *sell* justice'.
Matrimonial Causes—The act of 1937, with which I had something to do, has, on the whole, worked well. I deplore the large and increasing number of marriages that end in court, but believe that the new provisions have met a real need, especially in the past few exceptional years; and it must be remembered that we have no statistics of the number of divorces which are followed by happy and fruitful second marriages. One or two technical, non-controversial difficulties require attention, but this should be a Government job. I receive innumerable sad letters from citizens who are debarred from relief by the fact of a voluntary agreement to separate. I wish that after a proper period and with proper safeguards something could be done for them; but this, I know, could not be described as 'non-controversial'.
The law of *domicil*, as it affects the married woman, requires reform.

In the last Parliament I prepared and, with Sir Stanley Reed, introduced a Bill to amend the *Law of Libel*. As a result the Government appointed a committee of inquiry whose labours were interrupted by the war.

I also prepared and introduced a comprehensive *Betting Bill* but got no chance to advance it. It is, I confess, a somewhat ambitious measure for a private Member; but with income-tax at 10s. in the pound on worthily earned incomes it is fantastic that the vast expenditure on betting should yield no revenue at all; and my Bill was intended as the foundation for the control and taxation of betting.

- (v) THE ARTS AND PROFESSIONS—Almost my first brush with the Front Bench concerned the Civil List Pensions, the annual fund for which I proposed should be doubled in 1936: and my first success was in the following year when Mr. Chamberlain did so. With Mr. William Mabane and others I worked successfully to get the Entertainment Tax reduced, and but for the war should have continued the campaign, the end of which should be abolition. The activities of C.E.M.A., the relief of certain plays as 'educational', are welcome signs of a new relation between the State and the arts. The work of the British Council should be strongly maintained.

The income-tax laws bear harshly on the artist and professional man, I consider, in many respects, as against the business man. The Three Years Average should be restored. While ready enough for an improvement of our health services I have much sympathy with the doctors' objection to control, in technical affairs, by local bodies. And I am amused to observe that while all 'workers' must have a say in the control of their industry, if the doctors venture to have a say they become selfish 'vested interests'. I joined the other University Members in their protest against the recent Burnham award as it affects the graduate teacher. We do not regard the subject as closed. The teacher can scarcely be paid too much.

- (vi) THE BUCHMANITES—If there is any Oxford man who does not share or understand my hostility to Doctor Frank Buchman, head of the First Century Christian Fellowship, *alias*, the Oxford Group Movement, *alias*, Moral Rearmament, I hope he will study that gentleman's changing story in all the 'Who's Who's,' from 1928 onwards. You will observe,

under 'Education', that he 'studied Cambridge University, 1921-22'. I understand that that assertion has not much more to back it than his claim to use the name of Oxford. That claim, however, was officially granted by the Board of Trade. I thought it my duty to express in Parliament the resentment of most Oxford men; and the behaviour of the Buchmanites in the United States during the war has given me no cause to regret my action. I shall continue to keep my eye on this usurper of a noble name, whose influence upon the young I believe to be unwholesome.

- (vii) I shall continue to watch the *language* of the Departments and the draftsmen, I have made some vigorous protests in the House against wicked examples of legislation by reference and needless obscurity.

- (viii) **THE COMMONWEALTH AND EMPIRE**—I shall continue, also, with Sir Derrick Gunston, to keep a special watch on the affairs of Newfoundland, and press, if necessary, for vigorous and generous action to restore her political freedom and assist her economic future.

In 1936 Sir Stafford Cripps said: 'It is fundamental to Socialism that we should liquidate the British Empire as soon as possible.' To be fair, I do not suppose there are many of his party who would go so far as that, after the events of the past few years. But there is still too much airy academic talk of handing over the Colonies to 'international control'. Danzig and Tangier are not very encouraging precedents: Ceylon and Jamaica would be much more difficult. It is never proposed, I notice, to hand over the outlying portions of the Russian, or the French, Empire to international control. But the itch to belittle and frustrate the deeds of Britain abroad seems to prevail. And the Empire is a great continuing deed. If some of the Socialists had been in power Sir Francis Drake would never have got an exit permit: and Gibraltar and Malta would have been 'international' when war broke out.

- (ix) I am a great admirer of the work of the women Members, and try to support them when I can.
- (x) I have supported, and shall again, in the House, Fair Voting, especially the Single Transferable Vote, inexplicably rejected by the two great parties. Perhaps, after another crop of split votes, they will think again.

(5) THE ELECTION—It was necessary to have this Election sooner or later; and with so much synthetic venom about the sooner the better. I deplore the bitterness, the unfairness, the intolerance (of which the Yellow Books are a good example) recently imported into our public life. This is no time for intellectual arrogance or class-warfare. Some of the Socialists seem to be bursting with the one and bent on the other. They have already announced that they will not serve in another coalition. The men with whom they have worked and won so loyally and well have suddenly become outcasts, unfit for their society; and only the Total Dogma will do. Pilate did not wash his hands more righteously.

But is that the spirit for the coming days? After five and a half years of waste and destruction we are asked to build a Better Britain, besides being nurse and guardian to this enormous area of Europe—and finishing off Japan. All this may take some time; though no doubt we can do it. I think we have a Better Britain already—not in riches, maybe, but in spirit and understanding. We are more sure of ourselves, more patient of others. Many of us, like myself, have *lived* the 'classless society', in the ranks; and we know that such a society is not best constructed by class-hatred and dogmatic intolerance. The spirit of Left and Right, of the Sheep and the Goats, of Holier-than-thou, is not the spirit of the Forces, at home or in exile, of the Prime Minister's broadcast on the invasion of Russia: it is not the spirit of the Pacific Fleet or the 14th Army, still fighting, so very far away; it is not the spirit of Luneburg Heath, where none cares who it is that does a good job. Those who throw over not only the great leader, but the golden spirit of the past five years, are not, I feel, the surest guides to the Better Britain.

For myself, in that spirit, if you wish me to serve again, I shall do my best to deserve your confidence.

A. P. HERBERT

Luneburg Heath
May 31st, 1945

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